NUPI LAN

[Women's War of Manipur]



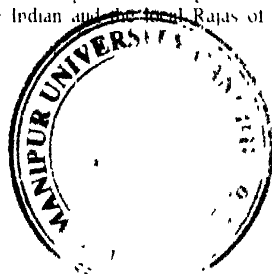
Karam Manimohan Singh

ABSTRACT THEME

The vice and abuses in the administration as were practiced by the reigning Rajas of Manipur, were left as a legacy to the first Raja who was independently appointed by the British against the long usage of primogeniture in the first decade of the twentieth century. The British policy of non-intervention in the internal management of the State no doubt enhanced the Raja's undesirable habits and ruthless antipathy which were all the time manifested towards the poor and the down-trodden, to grow up with a boundless gigantic size. This hypocritical and the unconcerned aptitude of the Raja were let loose by the Paramount so long as the Raja showed extreme loyalty and faithfulness to the British.

The menfolk and the bread winners of their families (the women mass) could no longer remain as mere silent spectators against the man made scarcity, the sudden rise in the price of rice, the partial treatment of the Raja for the rich and the poor viz. the Marwari rice traders and the helpless Manipuri consumers. The old customary usages, civil laws and the individual rights were put into the hands of ONE MAN i.e. the Raja. The people therefore needed a good reformer who was fearless and ready to listen to the groaning of the poor. The man was destined to come out during the outbreak of the Women's War ***(Nupi Lan)*** of 1939 when famine stared in the face of the mass who were then in the midst of wilderness.

The story is about the agitation and of the prominent leaders who spoke something in the open against the Indian and ~~the local~~ Rajas of Manipur.



Rs. 400/-

NUPI LAN

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[In 1904 there were disturbances in Imphal known as "nupi lan" or the Women's War]
Sir Robert Reid, Governor of Assam 1937-1942

Karam Manimohan Singh

2000



[**Irabot** hoisting the Pakhangba Patal
at the Fourth Chinga Session of Nikhil Hindu Manipuri
Mahasabha on 30th December 1938]

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

Mantharaba Eigi Leikol [A Poem Collection] 1977
Eidi Sadong Charoi [A Poem Collection] 1978
Hijam Irabot Singh and Political Movements in Manipur – [1989]
History of the Christian Missions in Manipur and Other Neighbouring States [1991]

A critic says about the book *Hijam Irabot Singh and Political Movements in Manipur*: 'Dr Karam Manimohan Singh is more than merely analysing the life and achievement of a charismatic Manipur stalwart; he is integrating them with the political developments in the State in the late 19^{th} and early 20^{th} century. It is a story of an interesting life and it has been told well and in great details. This volume must be one of the first full-length studies of Manipur's recent political history. He has come up with a fairly objective account which is sure to win critical acclaim.' [Debabrata Mukherjee, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20 May 1990]



First published in Imphal 2006 12 12
Published by K. Premlata Devi

Cover Illustration R.K. Joykumar Singh
Printed at Ibovaima Printers, Imphal [Manipur]

For

Minoo
Renuca
Thoibi

A WORD

Although not a historian by academic profession I feel that I belong to the stream which is flowing down towards the unseen valley of mist where the rich and poor, the strong and weak and the wise and ignorant shall meet and looking up to the past I long to find an answer to the age-old question of What happened afterwards?

We hope that people of the past were groping in the dark that they were miserably inactive and ruthlessly ignorant unlike we But it is not so They were the suppressed and forbidden class in their own society their claims were unheard and their wise suggestions expurgated without mercy by the strong and the powerful"

Individual *rights* and *equality* these are senseless words printed only in books and **might's right"** seem more meaningful as has been in use by mankind since pre historic time The British and their nominated Rulers in many of the Native States of India were the strong and the mighty people They were the Paramount Hunters and the people the Hunted

The Women s War of Manipur had to occur It was very natural and nobody could suppress it before it broke out The agitation was the hopeless resort for the poor people to ventilate their old desires and genuine grievance but with a far hope of attaining a culturally and socially higher and more acceptable activity But the Authority had denied this Their aspirations were considered unrealistic and very foreign The weak and the poor were also denied meanings of words like **freedom justice** and **equality** The strong have always over ruled the weak

I hope that the present book shall be welcomed by the weak and the poor alike whom my heart longs to feel and for whom the book was written

Imphal
23rd Monday October 2000 **Karam Manimohan Singh**

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CHAPTER ONE

Manipur at the Turn of the Century Vice and Abuses in the Administration as Practised by the Reigning Maharajas of Manipur

When Maharaja Chandra Kirti first took the Manipur Raj, matters in the State fell into a very bad condition The authorities who only thought of enriching themselves at the expense of the inhabitants caused great oppression The inhabitants became so dissatisfied with the rule of Chandra Kirti Singh and the attitude of the Raja and his advisers was also one of decided hostilities to the Political Agent

In 1851 the Government of India formally recognised Chandra Kirti Singh as the Raja of Manipur It appeared that he was the person most acceptable to the people The Political Agent was authorised to make a public avowal of the determination of the British Government to uphold him and to resist and punish any parties who might attempt to dispossess him Such a determination it was thought would in itself be sufficient to deter all attempts which might give rise to the necessity of acting on the threat implied in it The remarks of the Hon ble Court of Directors as definitely laying down the relations and responsibilities of the British Government with regard to the Raja and the people of Manipur are found recorded in a Political Despatch No 14 of 5th May 1852 (Para 3)

> Considering the very unfavourable reports of the Raja s administration hitherto given by Captain McCulloch we feel considerable doubt of the propriety of having bound yourselves to his support The position however which you have thus assumed of pledged protectors of the Raja imposes on you is a necessary consequence the obligation not only of attempting to guide him by your advice but if needful of protecting his subjects against oppression on his part otherwise our guarantee of his rule may be the cause of inflicting on them a continuance of reckless tyranny The obligation thus incurred may be found embarrassing but it must nevertheless be fulfilled and while needless interference is of course to be avoided we shall expect that as the price of the protection afforded to him the Raja will submit to our maintaining a sufficient check over the general conduct of his administration so as to prevent it from being oppressive to the people and discreditable to the Government which gives it support

The Proceedings of August 1862 No 206, and January 1863 No 100 read that the condition of the people of Manipur was again brought to the notice of the Government of India Dr Dillon submitted memorandum describing the systems of slavery and *Lalup* to which the people were subjected and the various means by which they were

oppressed The two customs of slavery and *Lalup*, he said, were at the root of every misery to which the people were subjected, and under their operation, their efforts were paralyzed and their poverty and consequent discontent intensified Dr Dillon was informed by the Ministers and others that the Hill people had destroyed over 5,000 tea trees during 1862-63 and cut down India rubber wherever it could be found to save themselves the labour of collecting the seed or the rubber without pay Chandra Kirti Maharaja had also infringed *Article II* of the Treaty of 1833 [7] He told the Political Agent that he would not allow tea-seed, ivory, silk, India rubber or wax to be bought by any trader, and issued orders that any man found selling these commodities would be killed

The Political Agent of Manipur received a letter from the Government of India dated 16th January 1863 which made specific reference to the imposition of *Lalup* and the slavery system prevalent in the State

> The prevalence of these customs shows a very unsatisfactory state of things at Manipur His Excellency in Council requests that you will point out to the Raja that it is not to be expected that a people subjected to forced labour for 10 or 20 days out of 40 and who are held to be treated and are treated as slaves of the Raja can remain content when able to compare their condition with those in neighbouring British provinces and that the result can only be revolt and the subversion of the Raja s rule
>
> You are therefore requested to inform the Raja that the British Government interfered lately to save him but that as he has not acted up to the spirit of the Treaty of 1833 he must not again look for British support to enable him to put down resistance on the part of his subjects provoked by oppression

In a report by Dr Dillon dated 8th July 1862 he described Maharaja Chandra Kirti Singh as a man of no ability who devoted his whole time to savage and licentious pursuits, and who left the affairs of his kingdom in the hands of ignorant and unscrupulous Ministers Armed by the British Government he oppressed and murdered the unarmed and comparatively inoffensive tribes about him, boasted of his vices and utterly disregarded the counsel of the Political Agent and the terms of the Treaty signed by his father The result to him of his security under British protection was the unrestrained cultivation of his vices [4] Captain Durand spoke of the Maharaja and those by whom he was surrounded as simply Naga savages nothing more or less Chandra Kirti Maharaja had two friends who shared his banishment in Cachar Balaram Major and Thangal Major According to Captain Durand these three were hand and glove and the one was as much Maharaja as the other In 1867 Colonel McCulloch said that the majority of the people were not disaffected to the Raja and that he was not personally unpopular with them, though several of his officers

were unpopular, but, McCulloch said, "No Minister could carry out the form of polity peculiar to Manipur and at the same time retain popularity"

Clear historical eye-witness accounts of Maharaja Chandra Kirti and his personality and the system of administration under which the Manipuri population had to toil their lives are found in the annual reports of the British officers who submitted the papers to the Government of India Dr Dillon took up the appointment of the Political Agent in Manipur in April 1862 (and removed from the post in October 1863) and in his report he wrote that the law in Manipur made every man the Raja's slave and gave the Raja power to sell or dispose of him as he thought fit This and the custom of *Lalup* were at the root of every misery to which the people were subjected On Dr Dillon's first arrival in 1862 Chandra Kirti Singh prohibited any person coming to the Agent to complain under penalty of death by being cut in two with a saw Dr Dillon said

> The cries of distress which by degrees greeted me were piteous to hear and these were not confined to the hill people but to almost every subject of the Raja's who did not participate in the acts of oppression The Raja himself having no control over his Ministers rejoiced at my arrival yet he was not without fear that the deeds done in the absence of an Agent would meet with the retribution they deserved *

The oppression and extortion was so severe that not even a brass *lota* (pot for carrying water) could with safety be kept by the poor A portion of the revenue was derived from a monthly sum of rupees 250 paid by a body of men for privilege to steal Dr Dillon said there was no redress for the oppressed and that it was upon the hill people that the greatest and severest oppression fell Before Manipur had arms the hill people were able to hold their own but after the arms were supplied the Raja made slaves of all the Kukis and Nagas he could seize and sent bodies of armed men nominally to collect taxes but in reality to rob and plunder Dr Dillon considered that the state of the country demanded that a change in the system of its government had to be made without which it would be almost impossible to raise the moral condition of the people The Raja he said had no power either to pull down or to set up he was nominally Raja and so by general consent but there were many who acted independently of him and whose power he could not set at defiance or overthrow The army consisting of 3 200 lazy discontented turbulent, inefficient men always desired a change the Ministers and officials, numbering about 1 500 who preyed upon the people, publicly robbed them and prevented their earning an honest livelihood would not willingly consent to any innovation likely to deprive them ultimately of their dishonestly acquired spoils consequently propositions Dr Dillon

made as to the manner of effecting reforms were altogether disregarded. He believed the Raja was anxious to effect changes, but said he was powerless to assist, or even to express a wish. Dr. Dillon, however, reported that the Raja was encouraging the appeal to the Political Agent of all his subjects in cases of oppressions; but the Government of India did not approve of the Political Agent's assumption of the administration of justice, as it would tend to subvert the authority of the Raja and his officers.

Colonel McCulloch in his *Account* said that the people of Manipur having formerly been in a state of serfdom, the generation of the Maharaja's time were only in a state of transition from that condition.[8] The weight of the *Lalup* system which pressed on the people was not imputed to the Raja, and it was not demanded that the system should be upset, but only that each family should be made to perform its proper duties. Endeavours to escape from the heavier duties had been the cause of splits in the tribes and of much ill feeling. In spite of the system of the *Lalup*, however, the people were well housed, well fed, and well clothed. Gold and gold ornaments, little seen in the time of Raja Nar Singh, were quite common, and the people, instead of being clad only in cloths of their own manufacture, as they then were, were now clothed in the superior fabrics of England The bell-metal coin of the country became insufficient for their greatest wants, and rupees had taken the place of this coin in all their larger dealings. The comforts of the people were added to by the encouragement given by the Raja to the large immigration of Kukis, whose industry had thus been placed at the disposal of the people, and by the facilitating of intercourse by the construction of roads.

Dr. Robert Brown, Political Agent of Manipur, reported the system of Government prevalent in the State and the Maharaja's attitude towards his people, to the Government of India in the last week of January, 1870. Dr. Brown wrote that the Government of Manipur was not for the benefit of the majority of the people, but the few. He believed, however, that within the last few years it had improved, and that the oppression, so rank some fifteen years ago (1854-55), was then much less. There could be no doubt that the Manipuri population had become generally more prosperous, and possessed money and property in the way of clothes and ornaments which showed them to be comparatively well off. The great fault of the Manipur Government seemed to Dr. Brown to lie in the little interest taken by Maharaja Chandra Kirti in the affairs of his country as the Maharaja left everything in the hands of his officials. Dr. Brown wrote:

"In spite of slight improvements in the Government the poorer classes of the population are far from being contented and bitterly complained of the exactions forced from them by the Raja's officials and the want of consideration shown for them by the Raja who although personally liked by the people is still secretly blamed for the little consideration he has for them in allowing them to be so oppressed by his officials for their own benefit."

No Naga was paid by the Maharaja or any one else. What the Nagas received at best was a certain amount of food. Any money that the Political Agent gave did not remain their property long even if given into each man's hand. They were nearly all slaves and the money went to the owner. Those that were not slaves were subject to *Lalup*. The Nagas would be delighted to work for very small pay, but the Political Agent could not get them without obtaining them through the Darbar who tried to fix an exorbitant rate for their services. Captain H. Durand once strongly remarked that it was not however the custom of the country and it never had been to pay for labour.[1] On Dr. Dillon pointing out to the Maharaja how suicidal this was to his interest and that of the people Chandra Kirti Singh replied that if paid the people would be no longer his slaves. According to Captain Durand the people were ground down to utter and miserable poverty by the Maharaja the Princes, Chief Officers and soldiers and nobody dared complain.[11] Every money anyone was known to possess was wrested from by one means or another. A payment from an official to an inferior was out of the question. Durand believed that it was only the arms and ammunitions supplied by the British Government that kept Maharaja Chandra Kirti where he was. The state of misrule of the country was indescribable; it was as much as a man's life was worth to be seen speaking to the Political Agent. Captain Durand talked to a villager on one occasion and the man was fined rupees 100, and threatened with death if he spoke to the Political Agent again. The soldiers were the best off; they were allowed to prey upon the rest of the population. A soldier carried no money with him; where he slept he dined and not at his own expense. No man could leave the valley without a pass; this order, the guards on all the roads and the impossibility of getting way their families alone kept people in the valley.[1] If the 'pass' system were abolished Captain Durand believed that the result would be a clearance *en masse* of all the working classes and the plundering classes would alone remain. In one of his reports submitted to the Government of India Captain H. Durand who was appointed to officiate as Political Agent at Manipur wrote:[13]

Tyranny and oppression are decentralized in this State. Extortion and cruelty are hydra headed and reforms in all State management absolutely necessary for the future

welfare of Princes and people. I hope if my views do not coincide with those of the Government I may still be pardoned for expressing them honestly.

In September 1877, Colonel Johnstone was appointed Political Agent at Manipur and in the annual report of the Manipur Agency for the year 1877-78 he made a swift remark that though he had seen forced labour as an institution in other States, he had never before been brought face to face with a system such as that in existence in the Manipur State, where every man was more or less the servant of the Maharaja and where under the name of *Lalup* every man was bound to work for ten days in every forty for the Raja, receiving a certain quantity of land for his subsistence. The vast majority of the inhabitants of Manipur were cultivators and had an immense amount of spare time on their hands; part of this spare time was employed in serving the Maharaja. In addition to this a portion of the produce of their fields was given as revenue, and beyond that the people were free to do what they liked with the remainder.[14] In the report Colonel Johnstone wrote:

The Manipuris generally seem to be quite as well off as the inhabitants of an average British district. They are, as a rule, better clothed and have the appearance of being quite as well fed. Abject poverty is unknown. The hill men in the valley are almost without exception slaves, the descendants of captives or of those who have become slaves for debt, or who have themselves become slaves for debt. The lot of these slaves is miserable, though positive ill usage seems to be rare. They and their children are debarred from the chance of ever acquiring sufficient to make themselves comfortable, and cannot by their own exertions make themselves independent. The hill men living in the hills and paying revenue, next to the slaves, suffer most. All the load carrying falls to their lot besides the payment of revenue. As a rule each man is liable to be called upon to make two journeys to Cachar in the year on the Maharaja's account without payment.

The whole land system of the Manipur valley started with the assumption that all the land belonged to the Raja and was his to give away or retain as he pleased. The land was subdivided into villages and their surroundings, the headman of each division or village looked after the cultivation and was responsible for the realization of the tax payable in kind by each cultivator. He held no interest in the land and was merely an agent of the Maharaja. Besides the land thus directly cultivated for the Maharaja, grants of land were given to officials and favourites, sometimes for their own lives only, or for a specified time, sometimes for themselves and descendants. These held their lands on payment of the usual tax in kind. Connections of the Raja, Brahmins and sepoys paid no rent or tax on a fixed proportion of land regulated in each case, but on any land cultivated above that proportion rent was paid. The proportion of land cultivated under what might be called the direct system on account of the Maharaja was about a third of the whole, rather more than a third was in

the possession of members of the ruling family, Brahmins and sepoys; the remainder was in the hands of the headmen, officials, &c., who held it by favour from the Maharaja.

In Manipur justice existed but in name, the courts being entirely corrupt, and decisions given in favour of the one who could pay most, or who had most friends in office. Notorious evil-doers might go unpunished for years, because they had powerful protectors, and the poor were ground down and ill used without any chance of redress. The State of things in Manipur during Maharaja Chandra Kirti's time was worse than it ever was before[16] and this seemed[16] to be highly probable, as the Maharaja attended less than ever to public business. There appeared to be no desire on the part of the Maharaja to improve matters. Colonel Johnstone believed that while the system existed of leaving all in the hands of favourites and friends, no improvement was to be expected. British subjects being able to appeal for protection to the Political Agent could always obtain justice, though it was sometimes grudgingly given.

A season of scarcity in Manipur had made everyone more than usually discontented, and that the distress was enhanced by the few rich men (high officials) in the State who had kept up the price of rice for their own benefit. The Maharaja trusted too much to his chief advisers, and in the administration of affairs generally evil counsels prevailed, and there was little hope of improvement. Justice was bought and sold, and the rich had their way and the poor went to the wall. A striking instance of the "want of consideration for the people" occurred in February 1879, when many hundreds of men were for weeks employed in building a small temporary town on the banks of the Loktak Lake, that the *Dowager* Rani might with a company of about 1,000 people enjoy a fine day's holiday; this too at a time when prices of rice were rising and scarcity beginning to be severely felt!

While there was very much to be mended in the prevalent state of things in Manipur, if the general state of happiness of the people was considered, they were certainly not worse off than in the majority of Native States. What perhaps would strike a casual observer most was the absence of the more showy externals of improved rule, and the fact that all classes of State officials boldly asserted that they could not aim at the same high standard that was attained in other British districts.[17]

The tax in kind realized from each cultivator was liable to many modifications. According to Colonel McCulloch, it varied from two to thirteen baskets from each *pari* Dr. R. Brown records that two baskets,

which nominally should only be taken from everyone alike, were realized from favourites, and that the average from others might be set down at 12 baskets yearly, which was seldom exceeded. But this only applied to land cultivated for the Maharaja, or held by those subject to *Lalup*. In cases where officials &c. held land, such as middlemen the burdens were more severe, running as high as twenty-four baskets by *pari,* which was the outside limit. The average yield per *pari* was about 150 baskets annually. Besides the Maharaja's taxes, every major or high official took what he wanted and could screw out of the people: and as no official was salaried, extortion was thus in a manner authorised.[18]

The Manipur courts were corrupt in the extreme, and implicitly subservient to the Maharaja. Dr. Dillon said that in every case of murder and robbery, paying the Raja or his mother a certain sum might effect the release of the culprits.[19] Justice without a bribe was not looked for. Even in glaring cases it was considered dangerous not to bribe some of the leading members. But whether bribed or not, the cases were decided according to the Maharaja's views, if these views were known. If it was thought that the Maharaja had interested himself in a case, though he had expressed no opinion, it remained undecided from fear of offending him by giving a decision against his wishes.

The chief courts were two in number – the Cherap and the Guard, or Military Court. There was also a court for the trial of cases in which women were concerned, and other minor courts for cattle disputes, etc. Cases decided by any of the courts might be appealed to the Raja, who decided the case as he thought proper. The Cherap, which was the chief court, consisted of thirteen senior members, all of whom were appointed by the Raja On being appointed, the members presented a *Nazar* to the Raja. The two senior members of the Court as at Maharaja Chandra Kirti's time constituted were the Jubraj (eldest son of the Raja), and a chief of a district. named the *Dola Raja*. The Guard or the Military Court was composed of eight senior army officers, named Majors, and other officers of the army. In it all cases in which sepoys were concerned were heard: it also occasionally took up other cases. The *Paja* or Women's Court consisted of six members appointed by the Raja from no particular class. In this court all cases of family disputes in which women were concerned, wife-beating cases, adultery etc., were in the first instance heard: serious cases might afterwards come before the Cherap. The other courts were unimportant. In former times the membership of the various courts was hereditary, but during Chandra Kirti's reign all the appointments were

made by the Raja McCulloch also said that these courts were corrupt to the extreme and unless in most glaring cases justice without a bribe was not looked for This opinion was found quite accorded with all the information which Dr R Brown could gain from non-official sources Judging from what the officials themselves said of the courts they were as nearly immaculate as such institutions could be The bribery that was carried on was however not of a voluntary kind but it was an open barefaced extortion According to Captain Durand too the courts were a means of extortion In his demi official to Mr Thornton dated 23rd April 1877 Captain Durand wrote that if any man was known to have a rupee somebody got it out of him A case was instituted against him and he had to bribe himself out generally getting into debt to do it and so it went on no redress no help no hope tyranny and misrule supreme Every Major and Raja s son held a Court and initiated cases against whom he pleased in his own house The officials were indignant at the idea of the Maharaja exercising any undue influence over their decisions Women might be tortured with thumb screws if they did not answer freely before the court Fining was the commonest punishment and it led to great abuses In the case of debt release followed payment of the debt

Nagas frequently came into Manipur for purposes of trade There was a hut built within the Palace boundary for all hill men who came in as traders This kept them all directly under Palace influence and away from that of the Political Agent The Naga traders naturally disliked this as it meant a good deal to them Captain Durand in his demi official to Mr Thornton dated 5th March 1877 strongly expressed that he repeatedly tried to get the Maharaja to build a *Serai* for travellers but nothing would induce him to do this Durand however thought this a matter that ought to be insisted on as he had every reason to wish that the Nagas and others who visited Manipur for the purposes of trade should be under his own eyes

Complaints by traders were not very frequent and chiefly related to increased charges on articles of merchandize which charges were constantly varied in the most arbitrary manner Dr Brown had often impressed upon the Manipuri authority that he considered he had a right from his official position to be informed of any and all changes in the customs dues levied on merchants either from the British provinces or Burma Although apparently acquiescing in this changes were frequently made without any communication whatever being made to the Political Agent In 1862 Dr Dillon said that the products of the country like tea seed ivory silk India rubber wax lac cows buffaloes coffee ponies wheat and gold would be forthcoming in enormous quantities if the

trader could be properly protected But Maharaja Chandra Kirti told Dr Dillon that he would not allow the first five named articles to be bought up by any trader and he issued an order that any man selling them would be killed Dr Dillon expressed his opinion that the Maharaja would not advance trade in any way unless directed to do so by Government, and he considered that any attempt to establish free trading whilst the Maharaja monopolized everything and refused to pay any man would be futile Tea-seed which was found plentifully in the hilly tracts northeast of the valley was eagerly sought for by the tea planters of the Cachar and Sylhet Districts and commanded a good price

Unless the Political Agent kept a strict watch attempts at monopolizing articles were constantly being made by the Raja in defiance of the Treaty of 1833 In March 1869 a move was made by the Raja in the direction of monopolizing the supply of betel nut but it being hinted to him that it would not do the idea for the time at least was abandoned Besides the complaint of heavy exactions in the shape of duties traders bitterly complained of the exactions at the various *Thanas* in Manipur territory They had to pass four *Thanas* before reaching Manipur and were stopped at each till the demand of the officer in charge was satisfied the unfortunate trader had to run the gauntlet of four of them before he reached Manipur This system of robbery was perfectly well known to the State authorities who made no attempt to put a stop to it They in fact sanctioned it as the officers in charge of *Thanas* receiving no pay must live by what they could screw out of the travellers and merchants So heavy were these exactions occasionally that in some instances merchants had actually had to return to the British provinces with their goods it being ruinous for them to proceed

Dr Brown in 1869 said he had a strong suspicion that *Article II* of the Treaty regarding trade was not carried out in its integrity by Maharaja Chandra Kirti and that traders wishing to enter the country from the British provinces were discouraged in every way He was informed on the best authority that the taxes on the entry of cloths especially had been increased during the previous four years five-fold and co incident with this, Dr Brown said

The Raja's Calcutta Agent has bought largely of the above in the Calcutta market for Manipur There is thus strong suspicion that the traders are overtaxed to keep them from entering the country and enable the Raja through his Agents to monopolize the supply of the above articles for his own benefit

In 1870 Dr Brown was told by the Government of India that the Raja was bound by his Agreement (1833) in no way to obstruct trade or

exact heavy duties, and he was requested to do all in his power to keep him to his agreement Colonel Johnstone estimated that about rupees 1 000 were levied illegally on traders, who were subjected to much annoyance, their packages being liable to be opened at any police station according to the caprice of the officer in charge The restrictions upon traders pressed more heavily upon the Manipuris than the Bengali or other western traders Before any Manipuri could leave the country on any errand whatever he must give security for his return to the amount of rupees 80 he must also definitely state a time for his return Should he overstay this period by even a single day a fine of rupees 5 was inflicted half of which went to the officer who granted the pass (without which no one could enter or leave the country) and the other half to the State Owing to the restrictions few Manipuris attempted trading and when they did took ponies from Manipur bringing back clothes Besides the above restrictions traders had to submit to endless annoyance and often had to bribe freely before they were allowed to sell their goods

Colonel Johnstone said that the system of duties on exports and imports was so bound up with the system of the administration prevailing in the country that he feared no improvement could be expected until some radical change was carried out

In his letter to the Government of India dated 24th April 1863 Dr Dillon enumerated a list of oppressive acts and customs which the Political Agent was under the impression he had by his influence induced the Raja to rescind These customs had never been altered in any material way if at all and the Political Agent was completely deceived by the Raja and his advisers on these matters The reforms said to have been carried out were probably never even modified and when their nature was looked into it was surprising that the Political Agent did not suspect the sincerity of the Manipuris in their assurances The abuses which were recorded as having been abolished in Dr Dillon s letter of April 1863 but which were in full or slightly modified force during Maharaja Chandra Kirti s reign were numerous Dr Dillon alleged that he relieved the people of the country of certain oppressive customs which pressed heavily on them and created discontent That he induced the Government to altogether relinquish the custom which gave every men in authority, on the most trifling charge the power to imprison and iron in his house any man of inferior grade even for owing him one rupee That he induced the Government to do away with the ancient custom of fining heavily any man in whose compound a dead cow or pony was found If the man could not pay, his wife and children were sold and the village paid the balance This custom afforded

perquisites. The system of *Lalup* was only a modified form of slave system, as under its operation none of the inhabitants were free to go where they chose in the valley, and were utterly prohibited from leaving it without a pass from the authorities and in many cases security for their return being demanded.

Captain Durand considered the *Lalup* to be of so severe a type as to be virtually slavery, and the taxation to be so heavy that life was barely supported, and could not be but for the labour of women *Lalup* was theoretically labour for a fixed number of days monthly, but practically it was whenever the labourers were wanted. In manufactures, such as salt and iron, it was incessant. Dr Dillon also considered that as the *Lalup* "obstructs trade" it was opposed to the spirit of the Treaty with Manipur, and that the Raja was therefore prohibited by the Treaty from countenancing or permitting it.

The slavery system which existed in Manipur was of two forms- 1st, that in which any one became a slave either temporarily or permanently of his own free will; and 2nd, when he or she was made a slave of forcibly, and against the will That was perhaps the most general cause of voluntary slavery. In this case a man in debt would confess his inability to pay and agree to serve his creditor until such time as the debt could be paid; his services thus were credited as interest on the original debt. although it did not follow that the original sum was in all cases taken; a greater or less sum might be taken, as might be agreed on. Men not in debt also became slaves for a money consideration of which they might have need; often, as they were fed and clothed at their owner's expense from "sheer laziness".

Nothing could be said in favour of the system under which people might become slaves not of their own free will. A not uncommon form of this kind of slavery was that of parents disposing of their children either temporarily or permanently- a fruitful source of immorality. This was only resorted to in extreme cases, as want of food etc., and was looked upon as a disgrace. For certain crimes people were made slaves In cases of theft, when the culprit was caught, but the goods not recovered in full, he and his family might be seized and sold until the claim for the stolen goods was recovered. In cases of debt, when the claim was not settled and no arrangement was made, the debtor and his family might be seized and sold in satisfaction of the debt. In adultery cases, when the claim for damages could not be realized, the same might happen. Maharaja Chandra Kirti had slaves numbering about 1,200 or 1,500. The classes who were the Raja's slaves were the *Ayokpa*, *Tangkhul* and *Kei*. McCulloch wrote on the slaves of Manipur:

'On a change taking place in the Rulers of the country it was formerly the custom to seize the slaves of those who had held office, and to divide them among the adherents of the new Ruler This practice when the changes of Rulers became so very frequent as it latterly did was found to entail upon individual more hardship than the worth of the slaves Slaves therefore when seized were not distributed amongst adherents but made to work for the Raja under the name of *Ayokpa*

Maharaja Chandra Kirti had ordered that slaves should remain in case of a change of officers the property of their owners under all circumstances Ill usage of slaves did not seem common they were generally treated as part of the family with whom they resided and did not hesitate to run away when they were ill treated which created a scandal and was carefully avoided Even in the mild form in which slavery existed however according to Dr Brown it was liable to gross abuses and bore hard in many cases of crime and debt upon the innocent members of the culprit's or debtor's family From Dr Dillon's description the slavery was not so very mild as would appear from Dr Brown's statements He said that it was a source of great oppression and that he had seen the backs of slaves lacerated by the lash and instances of wives and children torn from their families and sold on trifling pretexts

On the discontinuance of British superintendence over the *Manipur Levy* in 1835 a Political Agent was appointed in Manipur for the preservation of a friendly intercourse and as a medium of communication with the Manipur Government and as occasion may require with the Burmese authorities on that frontier and more especially to prevent border feuds which might lead to hostilities between the Manipuris and the Burmese Again in a Memorandum of 8th July 1861 Colonel McCulloch said that the public avowal of the determination of Government to uphold the Raja added to the duties of the Political Agent but needless interference in the administration of the country was to be avoided It was on this score that Dr Dillon was once remarked badly by the Government of India who did not approve of the Political Agent's assumption of the administration of justice as it would tend to subvert the authority of the Raja and his officials Dr Dillon was told that it was his duty to advise the Raja but not to assume the functions of Government himself

Almost 35 years later Dr Brown received an explicit instruction from the Government of India regarding the duties of the Political Agent stationed at Manipur In addition to procuring and reporting to the Government of India all necessary information, the main duties of the Political Agent appeared to be of two kinds

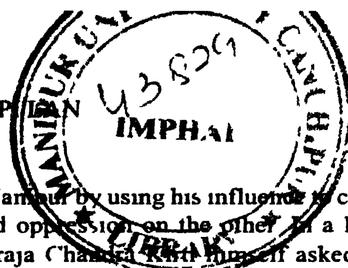
First to insist vigorously upon a strict fulfillment of the duties which the Raja of Manipur was bound by his treaty engagements to perform, and,

Second to bring his influence gently and gradually to bear upon the Raja for the reform of abuses in his internal administration

The duties of the Political Agent could not be better described than in the words of the Court of Directors in their despatch of 5th May 1852, namely to attempt to guide the Raja by advice, and, if needful, to protect the Manipur subjects against oppression on his part and to maintain a sufficient check over the general conduct of his administration, so as to prevent it from being oppressive to the people and discreditable to the Government which gave it support Everything depended on the tact temper and judgement of the Agent The object to be aimed at was to establish such an influence over the Raja and his people that the advice of the Agent would be readily listened to and reforms introduced gradually and one by one without disorganizing the ordinary administration It was in this spirit that His Excellency in Council expected the Political Agent in Manipur to deal with such questions as *Lalup* domestic slavery, the reform of the army the Courts of justice and other impositions of the Maharaja on the Manipuri subjects

In previous time it was the idea of the Maharaja and the people that the absence of a Political Agent in Manipur would create the entire cessation of trade with Burma on the Manipur side that there would be the oppression or destruction of numerous tribes under British protection the rising up of several Rajas in Manipur and ultimately the degeneration of the Manipuris into Nagas and the conversion of a rich and fertile valley into a desert Dr Brown even considered that the absence of a Political Agent would be a retrograde step' and could not fail to have a bad effect amongst the Manipuris, the Burmese and the Hill tribes But McCulloch once strongly advocated that the Political Agent in Manipur had with firm determination to prevent border feuds to put down the oppressive measures of Government and to keep a check over the general conduct of the administration He considered that Manipur certainly required a resident Agent and his absence would lead to almost immediate anarchy Withdrawal of the British protection would naturally split the Manipuri themselves among whom there were a dozen factions, against Maharaja Chandra Kirti, and each would endeavour to place his own man on the throne Even under the British protection such endeavours were not infrequent McCulloch was of opinion that the Political Agent at Manipur should be authorised to act independently and be responsible only to Government

It was already known that a British officer was required to arbitrate disputes on the Burmese frontier, and Manipur being surrounded by hill tribes there was no doubt that a Political Agent could be of great



service to both the tribes and to Manipur by using his influence to check lawlessness on the one hand and oppression on the other. In a letter dated 10[th] February 1864, Maharaja Chandra Kirti himself asked the Government of India to place an officer in Manipur. He said he believed the country would sustain injury if no officer were stationed there, and asked that Colonel McCulloch might be reappointed.[79] When the matters were settled and a British officer posted in the State, things changed and Maharaja Chandra Kirti attempted no longer to keep intact the spirit of his previous pleadings. The Political Agent became dependent on the will and pleasure of the Maharaja for everything.[80] His every word and movement were known to the Maharaja. He was, in fact, a British officer under Manipur surveillance. If the Maharaja was not pleased with the Political Agent, he could not get anything; he was ostracized "from bad coarse black *atta* which the Maharaja sells him as a favour, to the *dhobi* who washes his clothes and the Nagas who worked in his garden he cannot purchase anything at any price".[81]

The Manipur Court was almost openly hostile to the Political Agent though they had pliancy enough to pretend to a great regard for the Political Agent and the Government. Spies surrounded him and if he spoke to a man the Darbar knew the circumstance. Every official letter he wrote was at once made known to the Darbar. The only men allowed to come to him were Balaram Singh and Thangal Major and two or three of the worst men in the State. Others were beaten and fined if they came inside the gate of the Political Agent. Captain Durand made a general remark regarding the Political Agent in 1877:

> No hint can be given to the Durbar by the Political Agent on the most trivial subject without being met with stolid discontent and any insistence would cause ill feeling unless he can distinctly say this is what Government expects from Your Highness. The Political Agent is a cypher and treated as such except in personal matters where they seem to try to be civil. When the Agency was first established the Naga tribes in the hills around looked to the Political Agent as their master. He called them in and settled villages of them in the valley &c. and the Durbar acquiesced in all the Political Agent's orders who even conducted the internal administration of the State to a certain extent. Since Colonel McCulloch's time this has all changed and Colonel McCulloch is to this day consulted in all important matters by the Durbar.

The various Political Agents who were posted in Manipur all agreed in condemning the native form of Government as very bad. Upto the time of Maharaja Chandra Kirti's reign there was, however, very little interference with the internal administration of the State, and the practical result of the connection of the British Government with Manipur was merely to guarantee it from invasion from without.

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER ONE

Manipur at the Turn of the Century

1 See Political Despatch from the Hon'ble Court of Directors No 14 dated 5 May 1852 (paragraph 3)

2 Treaty of 1833 ? Article ... *The Raja will in no way obstruct the trade ... the ... countries by Bengali or Manipuri merchants He will not ... any duty and he will make a monopoly of no articles of merchandise whatsoever*

3 See Government of India Letter No 58 dated 16 January 1863 to the Political Agent Manipur

4 Ref ... Proceedings No 20 August 1862 Political A No 38 A November 1863 and Demi Official to Mr Thornton dated 26 April 1877 See also Demi Official to Mr ... dated 2 April 1877 Political A No 234 March 1867

5 See Proceedings No 100 January 1863 and No 207 August 1862

6 Cited in ... *Precis of Correspondence &c Regarding Manipur Affairs and the Cession of the Kubbo Valley to Burmah* Calcutta 1879 p 5

7 See Proceedings No 71 September 1862

8 Ref Major W McCulloch Selections from the Records of the Government of India No XXVII *Account of the Valley of Munnipore and of the Hill Tribes* Calcutta 1859 see also Political A No 234 March 1867

9 Dr R Brown Selections from the Records of the Government of India (Foreign Department) No LXXVIII *Annual Report of the Munnipore Political Agency for 1868 1869* published by Authority Calcutta 1870,pp 76 77

10 Demi Official from Captain Durand to Mr Thornton dated 28th February 1877

11 Demi Official to Mr Thornton dated 5th and 10th April 1877, 23rd April 1877

12 Demi Official to Mr Thornton dated 26th April 1877

13 Political A No 19 December 1877

14 Colonel J Johnstone *Annual Administration Report of the Manipur Agency* for the year 1877 78 No CLIII published by Authority Calcutta 1879 p 13

15 Op Cit

16 Op Cit

17 Colonel J Johnstone *Annual Administration Report of the Manipur Agency* for the year 1878 1879 No CLXVIII published by Authority Calcutta 1880 pp 22 23

18 See Demi Official from Captain Durand to Mr Thornton dated 23 April 1877

19 Proceedings No 100 January 1863

20 See Political A No 109 January 1863

21 See Conditions entered into by Raja Gambhir Singh Manipur on the British Government agreeing to annex to Manipur two ranges of hills situated between the eastern and western bends of the Barak dated 18th April 1833

22 J Clark Cited in *Precis of Correspondence* &c Op Cit p 29

23 See *Administration Report* for 1872 1873

24 RI to Dr R Brown *Annual Report of the Munnipore Political Agency* for 1868-1869 Op Cit p 80

25 Major W McCulloch *Account of the Valley of Munnipore and of the Hill Tribes* Op Cit p 12

26 Op Cit p 42

27 See Political Cons No 106 dated 11th February 1835

28 See Political A No 73 September 1862

29 See Political A Nos 104 106 April 1864

30 Demi Official letter of Captain Durand to Mr Thornton dated 28 February 1877

31 Demi Official (as above) dated 5th April 1877 and 6 June 1877

32 See Appendix B in *Gazetteer of Manipur* by Lieut E W Dun of the 28th Bengal Infantry recorded on 1 March 1885 The only two important and powerful subjects are the two ministers Thangal Singh and Balaram Singh The former is 68 years of age and the latter 58 They have been associated in the Raja s service for very many years and are acutely jealous of one another

Thangal Singh is the most forward and active and the readiest speaker of the two and has most sympathy with the western notions Balaram Singh has the reputation of being the most astute They may be fairly accurately described as representing in Manipur the Liberal and Conservative parties They command two regiments out of seven which compose the Manipur army and have the rank of General They are usually addressed by this title

Though at present possessed of great power, they depend entirely upon the favour of the Raja and may lose everything at his death Without the assistance of these officers nothing can be obtained in their respective districts whether coolies supplies or interpreters and it would be hopeless to attempt anything against their wishes

33 Cf J Clark Cited in *Precis of Correspondence* &c Op Cit p 28

CHAPTER TWO

(I)

A New Raja of Manipur under the British

Maharaja Chandra Kirti died on 20th May 1886 and was succeeded by his son Sur Chandra Singh. Before he died he distributed the offices of the State in the following manner:

Sur Chandra — Maharaja
Kulachandra Dhaja — Jubaraj
Tikendrajit Singh — Senapati
Thimbou Sana — *Samu Hanjaba*
Angou Sana — *Dolairoi Hanjaba*
Gopal Sana — *Lungganai Shanglakpa*
Paka Sana — *Sagol Hanjaba*
Jilla Ngamba — (minor, with no special post)

Maharaja Sur Chandra was a man of very weak character. He was personally very popular but he paid little attention to public business and spent hours every day in worshipping in the temple. He was not at all the person to keep orders amongst his brothers and he was a man who would be much happier as an ascetic than as a ruler. The peace of the State was frequently disturbed by the quarrels of his seven brothers and at last the family was broken up into two factions. On one side were the Maharaja's three uterine brothers headed by Paka Sana and on the other his four half brothers under the leadership of Tikendrajit Senapati. Maharaja Sur Chandra was quite unable to assert his authority over these two turbulent factions and matters reached a climax on the night of 21st September 1890 when the two younger brothers suddenly scaled the palace walls. In his letter dated 14th November 1890 addressed to J. W. Quinton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Maharaja Sur Chandra wrote:

> On the 21st September last (1890) after disposing of State matters with the Jubaraj (Kula Chandra Dhaja), I retired to rest as usual in the Palace. At about midnight I was suddenly roused from sleep by the report of firearms. The only explanation I could conceive was that my stepbrothers had rebelled against me. I rose at once and was tying on my *turban* when it was pierced by a bullet and as heavy firing began I concluded that the Palace had been treacherously seized and I made my way as rapidly as possible by a back door to the British Political Agency.

A few shots in the air were sufficient to drive the timid Maharaja to seek safety at the Residency. The next day, contrary to the advice of the

Political Agent, Maharaja Sur Chandra proclaimed his intention to abdicate, and to proceed on a pilgrimage to Brindaban, and on the 23rd of the month he left the State, accompanied by his three uterine brothers. Sur Chandra immediately changed his tone, and he represented to the Chief Commissioner that he had no intention of abdicating and solicited assistance to regain the Manipur Raj. In the meanwhile Tikendrajit Senapati who was the real mover in the rebellion, had induced his elder brother Jubaraj Kula Chandra Dhaja, to occupy the throne, and application was made to the Government of India to ratify this accession. Kula Chandra wrote to the Chief Commissioner of Assam:

> My eldest brother the Maharaja Sur Chandra Singh making voluntary abdication of the throne to me (the heir of the throne) left for Brindaban. Accordingly I ascended the throne of my father and grandfathers on the 8th *Aswin* last (23rd September 1890). I hope Her Most Gracious Majesty's Government will favour me as usually shown to my father and grandfathers.

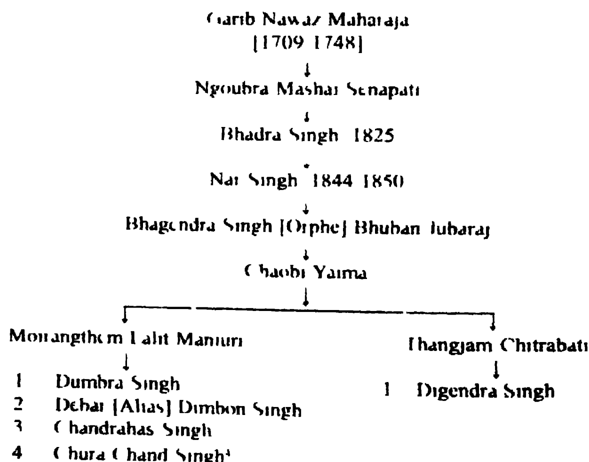
The Government of India considered the whole question and it was concluded that it would be to the advantage of the Manipur State and to the furtherance of British interest to recognise Jubaraj Kula Chandra in his new position as the Raja of Manipur rather than to restore Maharaja Sur Chandra. It was however decided to remove Tikendrajit Senapati from Manipur and punish him for his lawless conduct towards his eldest brother. The Chief Commissioner of Assam was thus directed to visit Manipur and carry out the orders of the Government of India. Accordingly Mr Quinton the Chief Commissioner started for Manipur with an escort of 400 men under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Skene. This force with the Political Agent's escort at Manipur and the support of 200 men *en route* from Silchar was considered sufficient to over awe the malcontents and quell any possible resistance. On arrival at Manipur the Chief Commissioner immediately announced that a Darbar would be held in the Residency the same day. Tikendrajit did not attend the Darbar on the plea of ill health and thus the Darbar was postponed until next morning and again he failed to appear. At an interview with the Maharaja the Political Agent was informed that the Maharaja was unable to enforce his brother's arrest.

Political negotiations having failed, the Chief Commissioner decided to capture Tikendrajit Senapati in his house, which was surrounded on the morning of 24th March by the British troops. A serious engagement ensued and the Manipuris attacked the Residency. An armistice was arranged and in it Mr Quinton and four other officers (Skene, Grimwood, Cossins and Simpson) who accompanied him under a flag of truce from

the Residency to the Palace, were cruelly and treacherously murdered The British troops retired to Silchar

An expedition was then ordered to Manipur to re-assert the political supremacy of the British Government, and to enforce the unconditional submission of the Manipur Darbar The force marched in three columns from Kohima, Silchar and Tammu, all of which reached the Capital on the 27th April 1891 On arrival, the force found the Capital deserted, the arsenal with its guns had been destroyed, and the villagers had looted the principal houses Kula Chandra Dhaja, Tikendrajit and the other brothers had taken to flight, and the leading officials were in hiding Within a month all the important people were captured and Tikendrajit and his two brothers were tried by a special commission at which Tikendrajit was convicted of waging war against the Queen-Empress and of abetment of the murder of British officers He was sentenced to death and hanged Thangal was also convicted on the same charges and he was sentenced to death and hanged Kula Chandra Dhaja and his brother were sentenced to transportation for life along with thirteen other persons [3]

In September 1891, the question of the future of the Manipur State was decided by His Excellency the Governor-General in Council, and Chura Chand, a minor, born on the 15th April 1885, the son of Chaobi Yaima, and the great grand-son of a former Manipur Chief, was selected as Raja by giving the title of Raja only instead of Maharaja The following would illustrate the family tree of the origin of the minor Raja



The *Sanad* granted to Raja Chura Chand Singh provided for the complete subordination of the Manipur State, and for the payment of a yearly tribute, which was fixed in 1892 at Rs 50, 000 For the treacherous attack on British officers a fine of Rs 2, 50,000 was imposed in 1892 The administration of the State during the minority of the Raja was entrusted to a Superintendent and Political Agent, who was given full power to introduce any reforms that he considered beneficial, but with instructions to pay due regard to the customs and traditions of the Manipuris and to interfere as little as possible with existing institutions The permanence of the grant conveyed by the *Sanad* depended upon the ready fulfillment by Chura Chand and his successors of all orders given by the British Government with regard to the administration in Manipur the control of the hill tribes dependent upon Manipur the composition of the armed forces of the State and any other matters in which the British Government might be pleased to intervene Thus from 1891 Manipur entered a new phase of its history characterised by close control by the British Government and indeed, until power was transferred to the young Raja and his Darbar in 1907 by direct administration by the British officers

In Manipur the minor Raja was surrounded with the senseless sycophants, and two or three hours everyday were spent in listening to other worthless favourites singing his praises, and the poor lad was often kept up at night to occupy the honoured seat at Manipuri nautch and feasts The Political Agent had given strict orders to his guardians (the Raja's mother Lalit Manjuri and grandfather Ramananda Singh, *Moirang Ningthou* and Member of the Cherap Court, to regulate the young Raja's life, so that he might grow up healthy and strong [5] The investiture of Raja Chura Chand was carried out in an open Darbar on the 29th April 1892 In the presence of some 8 000 persons and with due ceremonial Chura Chand was installed by Major H St P Maxwell, I S C , Political Agent and Superintendent of the State, as the Raja of Manipur The *Sanad* of the Governor General was presented to the Raja and its conditions were explained to the assemblage Under the *Sanad* of appointment the Raja's right was expressly declared to be derived solely from the Government of India, and its continued recognition to depend on the loyal fulfilment of the Raja's duties as a "tributary prince" At the conclusion of the investiture ceremony Maxwell's speech was read out in the Manipuri language He then read out the *Sanad* and presented it to the Raja and the *Sanad* was again read out in Manipuri All the persons present in the ceremony stood and saluted, the Manipuri subjects filed past the Raja, and paid obeisance to him Maxwell took the advantage of the occasion to introduce some

changes in the government of the State As desired by the Government of India he terminated the *Lalup* system and in addition he abolished the cruel system of slavery assessed the land revenue at a uniform rate of Rs 5 a *pari* or two half acres and the house tax in the hill tracts at Rs 3 per annum and released 15 prisoners from the State Jail under sentences not exceeding six months imprisonment

The Political Agent of Manipur was actually not in favour of the abolition of *Lalup* (vide his letter to the Chief Commissioner of Assam dated the 31 October 1891) until the roads were further improved but the Government of India in a letter No 568 I dated the 26[1] March 1892 expressed a desire that *Lalup* should be abolished as soon as circumstances permit it of this reform It was in accordance with these instructions that Major Maxwell made the announcement of April 29 1892

The *Lalup* was such a system which so greatly assisted in improving the backward communications in the State In addition to the desire of the Government of India to abolish the *Lalup* Maxwell was guided in his action by the numerous cases of distress caused by the system which actually came to his knowledge The previous Darbar of Manipur worked the *Lalup* in the same slow and easy fashion of its other undertakings the majority of the *Lalup* labourers on duty idled away their time and more often than not were fed by the State during the term of service Under the British Engineers a real hard day's work was exacted from each man and he had to feed himself When sickness entered a house the *Lalup* member had either to carry out his *Lalup* or purchase a substitute In former days the payment for a substitute was a few annas but under the more businesslike way in which the *Lalup* was worked by the British it rose to 6 and rupees

In Manipur the internal trade of the valley was carried on by the women who were remarkably industrious and the *Lalup* fell heavily upon their earning When a husband was unable to perform his *Lalup* through sickness the substitute was purchased by the wife's industry and again the idle husband was relieved when practicable by the same means Over and over again had the groans of the *Lalup* labourer reached the ears of the Political Agent and in consequence of the *Lalup* many disappointments were expressed by the subjects of the State at the British rule It further possessed the drawback of affecting only the poorer classes of the community It was well known that all the Brahmins and other well to do persons easily escaped the duty Daily labourers on small wages were obtainable in the Manipur valley and there was no difficulty in obtaining labour for the public works in Manipur

In place of the *Lalup* the Political Agent assessed the valley with a house tax of Rs 2 per annum. He estimated that the tax would produce a sum as Rs 50,000 yearly, which would help to carry out the public works of the district in an efficient manner. The poorer classes would be able to work out the tax and the rich and others would have the opportunity to share the expenditure incurred on communications. The homesteads of the people were not taxed, and in the majority of instances the compounds were large.

The following was the announcement of Major H St P Maxwell on the abolition of the *Lalup* system in Manipur at the investiture of Raja Chura Chand on 29th April 1892:

> The first measure which is most open to abuse is the *Lalup* system. This is a system which calls upon a certain part of the population to labour free for the State for ten days in every forty. The burden of this duty falls upon the poor and the rich and well to do escape it altogether. When sickness enters a house the *Lalup* member has either to carry out his *Lalup* or purchase a substitute and very often the family is impoverished owing to his cause. It is of course necessary for the welfare of the State that its communications should be kept in good order and that its public works should be progressive but it also is the essence of just Government that these works should not be kept up at the expense of the poor only or of only a small portion of the community. It is fair that every one should bear his quota of this expenditure and in consultation with the leading Manipuri gentlemen in Manipur I have come to the conclusion that the system of *Lalup* must be abolished and it will cease from this date. To provide for the necessary expenditure on public works as a substitute for *Lalup* a uniform tax of Rs 2 a house per annum throughout the valley will be levied.

In the Political Agent's speech at the investiture ceremony the abolition of the cruel custom of slavery prevalent in Manipur was also made known to the public. The question of slavery attracted Maxwell's attention ever since the arrival of the British troops in Manipur. Early in May 1891 Maxwell was given a list showing the number of the Raja's slaves and ever since the birth increase to this number was reported to him. His sanction to marriages of these slaves was always solicited.

The chief duty of the Raja's slaves was to cultivate the royal lands retaining for themselves just sufficient of the produce to sustain life, to work for the Raja at all times and it was the custom of the master on marriage to settle on his wife's family several of his slaves. Favourite Ministers and others were also on occasions rewarded by a gift of a certain number of slaves. Only under very special circumstances were the Raja's slaves released and the great majority were born into slavery.

Ordinary individuals possessed slaves by purchase, when a person was fined in a court of justice and was unable to pay he was sold to any other person willing to pay the fine and the slave was retained until he was able to refund the purchase money. Parents when pressed for funds sold their children and any children born of these slaves became the property of the master of the slave. A husband for the same reason would often sell his wife and children and marrying another woman would commence life afresh. On repayment of the purchase money this class of slaves could redeem their liberty but as a matter of fact having to work for their master no means were open except a nugget fall from the skies, to accumulate money and death only freed these poor people from serfdom. Maxwell ordered that all persons who were in the bondage of slavery at the time (1892) to private individuals would cease to be slaves in five years from the 29th April 1892 or at any previous date on repayment of the purchase money deducting one fifth for each year's service commencing from that date.

Maxwell made the announcement on the abolition of slavery system in Manipur in the following words:

> The English nation has spent millions of pounds in suppressing and attempting to abolish slavery and throughout Her Imperial Majesty's dominions slavery is strictly prohibited. I was surprised to find that in Manipur slavery was so common. Parents are known to sell their children and these children when of age marry and their children again become the property of the owners of the parents. A heartless and good for nothing father to satisfy some passing need will sell his wife and children and though they may by repayment of the original purchase money redeem their liberty as a matter of fact they never have the means of doing so and become as much the property of their master as his plough cattle.
>
> Any nation or people where the affection of children for their parents is alienated can never prosper and it is nowhere more striking than in Manipur how the bulk of the people are hateful of each other and merciless in their dealings towards each other. I do not wish you to understand that I think no parents here to day are worthy parents, on the contrary I know many of you present to day are as affectionate parents as are to be found anywhere in the world and that your children return you the same affection. To you I do not allude.
>
> From this date all these slaves are released. From this date also the sale of minors is prohibited and no woman can be sold to work for another against her wish.
>
> Further all persons at present in slavery shall be considered to have redeemed their liberty in five years from this date or at any previous date should they be able to repay the actual purchase money deducting one fifth for each year's service from this date.

Manipur in the First Decade of the Century

The main source of income of the Manipur State was from the cultivated land in the valley held chiefly by the Hindu Manipuris

In the time of the late Darbar the cultivators paid revenue in kind and labour. As no officials received salaries in cash, they were remunerated by allowances in paddy; and public buildings, bridges and roads were constructed and repaired by *Lalup* or unpaid labour. For a State so isolated as Manipur, this system was far from unsuitable. It certainly retarded progress but there were many advantages connected with it The *Lalup* population, possibly 70 per cent of the male adults became hardy and strong and industrious and all the articles of food were cheap The continuous employment of the people gave no leisure for individual quarrelling or for inciting rebellion against the authorities. It was true that petty revolutions happened very frequently, but they were not connected with the labouring population, but with pretenders to the throne who, owing to the much-married condition of the royal families, were very numerous In fact, one of the largest suburbs of the Imphal valley was altogether populated by descendants of past chiefs, most of whom had as much legal title to the throne as the actual occupant [10]

In the year following the British occupation, the revenue from the valley lands was collected for the most part in paddy, the people being given the option of paying either in cash or kind. In the succeeding years, the revenue was paid in cash only, as each cultivator had received a *patta* for the land in his holding The clerks of the State Office collected the revenue, but the system revealed the disinclination of the Manipuris to pay taxes unless personally visited, and the result was to leave very large arrears at the end of the year. In his *Annual Report* Maxwell recorded the following.[11]

> "Arrears are very hard to realise, especially from Manipuris, who, speaking now of the male sex, are exceedingly thriftless, and paying creditors is not a strong point in their character On the other hand, Manipuri women set a most splendid example for industry and thrift, and many times have they scraped together the funds to satisfy the land tax, which, instead of being paid by their worthless partners to the office, is made over to the bazar shop-keepers for a pair of red stockings and patent leather shoes "

To avoid accumulating arrears and many subsequent troubles for the purpose of collecting land revenue, in 1894-95 the valley was divided into four divisions or *Panahs*, each under a fiscal officer called *Lakpa*. They were named *Ahallup, Naharup, Laipham* and *Khabam*, and a commission of 10 per cent on collections remunerated the *Lakpas*. In this payment was included the salary of the *Panahs'* establishment. Each *Lakpa* kept up an office establishment of writers and peons, who received their salaries direct from the State Office, but the cost was deducted from the

commissions of 10 per cent on collections, which was allowed to *Lakpas* as remuneration. In 1894-95 an *Amin* establishment to check illicit cultivation was appointed and had commenced operations. Though perhaps not working with the energy that might be desired, the *Amin* establishment was able to give the boundaries to all *Pattas* coming within their season's operations. Rice being the staple crop of the Manipur valley, the demand for it arose from

1 The Manipuri population,

2 The military garrison and foreigners in Imphal, and,

3 The station of Kohima in the Naga Hills.

Any supply in excess of the demand was stored in the country, and the larger the supply, the greater the safeguard against the gaunt stalking horse famine. Manipur history related more than one famine and although communication with the outer world was much improved, yet nothing but a railway would avail the country in case of want. Until quite the end of 1895 the price of rice in the Manipur valley was very low, and when the food was plentiful no Manipuri ever laboured for hire and money was not circulating freely. It might be contrary to the tenets of political economy but in Manipur cheap food did not mean spare cash for luxuries, it meant an idle and satisfied existence, lots of smoking, drinking and dancing and holiday making which cost little or nothing. Only when the food prices were high did the people bestir themselves and by the high rate of wages ruling in Manipur did the people find themselves in a position to purchase luxuries. As every Manipuri was an agriculturist he gained also by the high price of rice though not perhaps to the extent he would were the demand not limited to the Manipur valley and the small population of Kohima.

From the various petitions of the Manipuris which were submitted to the Chief Commissioner of Assam when the latter visited Manipur in February 1895 th[illegible] appeared a peculiar Manipuri tone of a lack of collective social aspiration, comfortable social environment and a wider exchange [illegible] communications. Towards the end of February 1895 Mr (Sir) W[illegible] the Chief Commissioner of Assam visited Manipur who [illegible] eagerly awaited by the inhabitants of the valley. The people [illegible] applications for the Chief Commissioner's consideration and [illegible] individual applications were also given for allowances from [illegible] number of connections of the previous royal family. The Manipuris solicited the following changes

1. A reduction of the land revenue,
2. The removal of the members of the Cherap Court, and the substitution in their places of more suitable men, which, in other words meant the men who headed the deputation,
3. The remission of revenue altogether in bad seasons,
4. The complete abolition of forced labour on roads and bridges, and
5. The exemption of well-to-do men and Brahmins from any taxes whatever

In the petitions no mention was made of an improved water-supply and drainage scheme, larger supply of primary schools, and better communications - all of which were the crying needs of the day in the Manipur valley[1]

The final order of the Government of India in their letter No 1878-E dated the 21st September 1891, contained the following instruction to the Chief Commissioner of Assam [1]

The education of the newly selected Chief is one of the objects to which the attention of the Political Agent should be directed I am to say that he should remain as much as possible in Manipur and that the aim should be to make him a practical ruler contented with his position and surroundings and willing to spend his life in the management of his State *A complete English education is a matter of secondary importance*

As the result of an interview the Chief Commissioner had with the minor Raja Chura Chand and his family, arrangements were made to educate the Raja and his half brother Digendra Singh, at the Mayo College Ajmere On 15th July 1895 the two lads left Manipur and reached the College on 5th August Captain H I Goodenough Assistant to the Political Agent, and the boy s grandfather accompanied the party as far as Ajmere Colonel Loch A D C the Principal of the College kindly agreed to take the boys into his own house and to give them his personal supervision

The minor Raja had many personal attendants during his school days at Ajmere There was a Manipuri interpreter, a Manipuri guardian a bearer and two Brahmin cooks The interpreter and the guardian had also each a servant The Principal of the College regulated the expenses of the boys at Ajmere

Situated as Manipur was its inhabitants had to [illegible] on their own surplus stores of grain in the event of scarcity [illegible] would overtake Manipur no efforts on the part of the State [illegible] at whatever expense could save the inhabitants There were [illegible] wealthy Manipuris in the State The bulk of the population [illegible] for its support on agricultural pursuits and allowing that one third only of the valley population say 50 000 people, required relief it would take

2,500 carts or over 30 000 coolies (per mensem) to provide this proportion of the population with half a maund of food stuffs per head per month Commenting on the recklessness of the Manipuri inhabitants of the valley and their ignorant belief in the wrong tenets of a political economy, Captain H W G Cole once remarked [13]

> In time the Manipuri will learn to cultivate a sufficient area of land to supply not only his household wants but to enable him to sell enough if only to pay his revenue and to lay by against a bad season At present he has not learnt to do this Indolent and improvident as he is by nature and slow to change from the customs of his forefathers he cultivates enough to give him sufficient for his wants in an average year If the season is a good one he will have enough and to spare A poor outturn will [illegible] But any surplus will be the result of nature not of his own exertion

The land revenue formed approximately two-thirds of the total revenue of the Manipur State It was derived from two sources a land tax on cultivated lands in the valley amounting to Rs 5 per *pari* of two and a half acres and a house tax called the *Lalup* House Tax amounting to Rs 2 per house inhabited by an adult male of the valley population This latter tax was originally instituted in lieu of *Lalup* labour The assessment of land tax was checked by an establishment of eight (8) *Amins* in the charge of an official known as the *Amin Lakpa* who together with his establishment received fixed pay The establishment was employed in measuring lands under cultivation As was pointed out by Sir William Ward the Chief Commissioner of Assam during his visit to the State the Manipuris got to learn to pay revenue for the lands they cultivated, and it was felt very desirable that the survey of the valley had to be completed before Raja Chura Chand was placed on the Manipur *Gadi* With this view proposals were submitted during 1896-97 (May) for the loan of the services of a Sub Deputy Collector to supervise the land revenue administration of the State The matter of arrears on the land revenue and the *Lalup* House Tax received special attention Enquiries tended to the conclusion that a considerable proportion of them were unrealizable, either on account of the death or departure from Manipur of the lessees, or by the arrears having been incorrectly entered as such It was a fact that the *Lakpas* preferred to swell their collections by going to the best pay man first and leaving those in arrears to be settled with at leisure Captain Cole observed in May 1897 [14]

> A Manipuri is a shocking difficult person to get money out of and I can readily imagine that those habitually in arrears have wiles enough to make even a hardened London writ server give up the chase in disgust

In response to the application of an appointment to the newly created post of a Sub-Deputy Collector, Babu Raj Kumar Rai was nominated to the post and he joined his appointment on 2nd August 1897 He held charge of the land revenue administration of the State and of survey and settlement operations in the Manipur valley

The system of the land revenue administration in Manipur was introduced in 1894 as a very necessary measure of decentralization to prevent for the future the great accumulation of arrears of revenue and of land cases which had occurred under the original system of direct management of land revenue business by the Superintendent of the State s Office This office was entirely devoid of experience in revenue matters and had no adequate staff either for the measuring up of new lands for enquiring into the innumerable disputes as to the holdings or for hunting up defaulters and realising the arrears due from them The introduction of the *Lakpa* system was expensive but it proved for a time very successful in raising the percentage of collections

The arrears were partly the result of the incapacity and indolence of the *Lakpas* partly of the chaotic state of the land revenue records which based as they were on the inaccurate figures of the Raja s village officials hastily collected in the years immediately following the British occupation had not thereafter been kept systematically corrected, and partly of an organized system of fraud in the case of at least one of the *Lakpas*

For political reasons Manipuris of influence and standing, rather than men of any special capacity for the work, were at first appointed to the *Lakpa* s posts Every Manipuri considered that the *raison d etre* of an office was first and foremost to enrich its holder That there were duties and responsibilities attaching to the post was a secondary consideration Accordingly when added to this belief was the comfortable assurance that come what might the income of a *Lakpa* must in any case be large far larger for instance than that of the most highly-paid Sub-Deputy Collector it was not surprising that the results of the new system would have proved incommensurate to the outlay The wholesome rule that each *Lakpa* would have an office in the centre of his *Panah* having unfortunately been allowed to fall into abeyance the *Lakpas* spent almost their whole time in the capital [1]

The new Sub-Deputy Collector, Babu Raj Kumar Rai had arrived on the 2nd August 1897, and immediately on the 6th of the month he reported to Mr A Porteous officiating Political Agent of Manipur

that he discovered serious irregularities in the accounts of the *Naharup Lakpa* Golap Singh and that his balance as shown by his books, was found short by a large sum." Mr Porteous at first only warned Golap Singh to pay in his book balance before the next treasury day. With some delay Golap Singh succeeded in paying in the full amount whereas it appeared he had also been giving receipts for revenue, without crediting it at all. On 13[th] August 1897 Mr Porteous suspended Golap Singh from his post of *Naharup Lakpa* pending full enquiries into his accounts for past years. Investigation showed that Golap Singh had embezzled large sums of money amounting to Rs 2,700 in round numbers the property of the State. His practice was to give *raiyats* on pretence that their payments were short of the full demand due by them temporary receipts for sums paid, such sums being thereafter credited neither in his cash book nor rent roll and the *raiyat's* name still appearing in the arrear list although in fact no arrear was due. On 28[th] September 1897 A. Porteous tried Golap Singh the *Lakpa* of the *Naharup Panah* on the charge of misappropriation of State funds and on 20[th] December the case of embezzlement was decided. A. Porteous passed sentences of six months imprisonment in each case (Golap and his clerk) with a fine of Rs 500 in addition on Golap Singh.[17]

The step had an excellent effect in convincing the other *Lakpas* that an effective control which it was impossible for the Superintendent of the State himself to have exercised would in future be maintained over their doings. Among the improvements with regard to the land records and revenue made during 1897-98 mention might be made of the following:

1. The charges of the *Lakpas* being unwieldy in size, a beginning was made in reducing them by constituting the town of Imphal, which was a well recognised area, a separate *Panah*.

   Every *Lakpa* was ordered to furnish accounts for amounts varying from Rs 5,000 down.

3. All connection of the *Lakpas* with settlement business or registration was put an end to and the work was entrusted to the Sub Deputy Collector working through his field staff. The performance of their duties by the *Lakpas* was marked by endless delay and converted by them their duties into a fruitful source of illicit gain.

4. The entire management of the State land revenue business in the valley was devolved on the Sub Deputy Collector.

5. To put an end to the confusion into which the land records had fallen owing to the absence of anything in the form of a *Das Chitta* to which the lands in any given *Patta* could be referred and from which it could be ascertained where lands were situated, steps were taken to have the whole valley roughly surveyed by rod. The *Imphal* establishment was therefore abolished and a temporary staff of four *Kanungos* [illegible]

The most important questions relating to the land revenue settlement and personal matters relating to the young Raja were fully dealt with by Sir H J S Cotton, K C S I, the Chief Commissioner of Assam when he visited Manipur in January and February 1898 During his stay in Manipur Maxwell took an opportunity to submit a very important "Note' to the Chief Commissioner on the question of exemption of the Brahmins and Rajkumars from revenue The Chief Commissioner highly commended Maxwell s remarks (on the exemption of the Brahmins and Rajkumars from revenue) and it was even granted that Maxwell s opinions were of the highest weight on it and all other subjects connected with Manipur

The Brahmins in Manipur used always to be given lands rent free i e although other persons were in the habit of placing a certain amount of the produce of their fields in the Royal granaries the Brahmins gave nothing The majority of this caste lived on their priestly profession and held no land but the higher ecclesiastics possessing slaves were able to cultivate large areas of land and accumulate considerable wealth Although allowing all the temples the same concessions as before, Maxwell brought the individual Brahmins under assessment This was more for the reason that under the last Darbar's rule individual exemptions from revenue were so numerous and the State income so small and incapable of meeting the increasing expenditure that it was very difficult to draw the line as to who would be exempted and who would pay than for anything else The Brahmins of Manipur were exceedingly well off but were not so favourably placed under the British administration While forwarding his arguments on the exemption of revenue Maxwell remarked on the general characteristic of a peculiar Manipur Rajkumar [18]

Rajkumars or as they are called in Manipur *Ningthao Machas* i e sons of Rajas are very numerous if for instance a Raja had eight sons and these sons were equally well blessed with male issue the whole 64 grandsons would be *Ningthao Machas* and their sons again and so on As most Manipuris of high status have several wives they frequently have large families and the *Ningthao Machas* in Manipur are very numerous From among them usurpers to the *Gadi* come and they are at the bottom of much mischief and were always dreaded by the late Darbar after each revolution a number were ejected from Manipur but now many of the traitors have returned To those on the side of the royal family exemption from land revenue was granted and many held offices in the State but the remainder had to rub along anyhow and received no concession from the Darbar

Rajkumars were a troublesome people, Maxwell observed, and he gave them little encouragement He suggested that the Brahmins might be assessed at half rates, as also those Rajkumars only who were descended from Raja Nar Singh If there were not many of these latter Maxwell was inclined to exempt them altogether from the payment of revenue

The employment of a foreign agency i.e., non-Manipuri officials in the land revenue department for instance, had the disadvantages of reducing the desire to self-government. The late Manipur Darbar in the time of previous Maharajas had kept the Government of the country in the hands of its own subjects. It was felt desirable that when the temporary administration of the Manipur State by the British was completed they would endeavour to make it over in a condition that the Raja might be able to continue the government in the same manner of previous age with the addition of officers better trained for the position. With this object, the Political Agent had proposed to gradually thinning out the foreign element and replacing the Settlement Officers with Manipuris. But it was thought necessary for some time yet to retain the efficient Sub Deputy Collector and a few of the superior supervising officers and in due course the services of these officials had to be dispensed with. Maxwell from his long acquaintance with the Manipuris made an observation on the peculiar nature of the valley inhabitants.

My experience so far has been that Manipuris with few exceptions cannot be trusted in positions of authority and more especially in positions which entail the collection of public monies unless most carefully supervised. The mere fact of money coming into his hand is sufficient inducement for a Manipuri to spend it on his own requirements. The ill consequences later on never for a moment given him a thought. Time, education and example will I hope effect the change which we desire.

During 1898-1899 an area of 135,683 acres of the Manipur valley proper was surveyed under the supervision of the Sub Deputy Collector Babu Raj Kumar Rai with 20 *Amins*, 2 *Kanungos*, 1 Survey Master and the Imphal *Kanungo*. The villagers generally were satisfied with the survey for the reason that the land under their cultivation was now assured to them. The dissatisfaction arose from the residents of Imphal, and more particularly from the numerous class called the Rajkumars who might be said to be a "poverty stricken body of professional idlers preying upon the weak." In the time of the late Darbar a number of the Rajkumars were very often summarily removed from the State as undesirable subjects. Maxwell ably remarked [30]

I remember reading a magazine article some time ago in which it was shown that every Englishman if he only went far enough back could claim relationship with the occupant of the English throne and on the same principle the Rajkumar class in Manipur has come into existence. Their power to cause mischief has generally intimidated the Native Chiefs of the State and license was accorded to them to live on their weaker countrymen.

Since the British administration of the State the Rajkumars had fallen on evil times. The villagers no longer cultivated their lands on rack-renting terms they preferred naturally to hold land of their own

at the existing low rate of revenue. He found it more and more difficult to pay up his revenue unless his hands were in cultivation, and thus compelled to sublet his holdings at a reasonable rent, which of course had much reduced his income. The new settlement made matters worse for him; he had now to pay revenue on all his cultivation, whereas before the survey he generally managed to conceal half the land he occupied; the villagers, moreover, finding it so easy to take up new lands on *patta* were more inclined to abandon the position of their sub-tenants and become *patta*-holders themselves. For these reasons most, if not all, opposition to the survey and settlement had emanated from Rajkumars, and they were very busy agitating. They wanted to be exempt from all payment of revenue, or, at any rate, to hold lands at absurdly low rates, as compared with the rest of the people, which would enable them to sublet the lands and retain a sufficient income to live at ease. They wished everybody else to be highly taxed. Otherwise, if the revenue of all was reduced to the same low rate, the difficulty of obtaining sub-tenants again arose. The late Darbar gave the Rajkumars sweet and bitter treatments at intervals. On their part, the British did not accept them as a privileged class.[21]

By 1901 Sir. H.J.S. Cotton, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, decided that Raja Chura Chand and his half-brother Digendra Singh should return to Manipur in October of the year. Chura Chand had attained the age of sixteen in April 1901, and his half-brother was four months older than he was. The lads had now been educated at the Mayo College in Ajmere for nearly six years, but the time came when the young Raja had to be specially trained under Colonel Maxwell's eye to learn his duties at Manipur, and, in accordance with the orders of the Government of India at the time of his investiture in 1891, "to make him a practical ruler, contented with his position and surroundings, and willing to spend his life in the management of his State." Raja Chura Chand had to learn and know his people and thoroughly familiarize himself with the system of the administration prevalent in Manipur.[22] He, accordingly with his half-brother returned to Manipur in September 1901 and took up his residence in the *Rajbari*, where a suitable house was built for him. Raja Chura Chand took the opportunity to receive Lord Curzon, His Excellency the Viceroy when the latter paid a visit to Manipur in November. His Excellency reached Manipur on 15th November and halted for three days in the State. On 16th a Darbar was held in which Raja Chura Chand Singh, his half-brother Digendra Singh, Pushkar Singh (President of the Cherap Court), Ramananda Singh *Moirang Ningthou* (grandfather of the Raja) and

Members of the Cherap and the Town Panchayet – were all presented by the Political Agent to His Excellency the Viceroy

A great eye-sore and feelings of hatred were no doubt expressed by the inhabitants of the Imphal valley proper against many of the government officials, especially those who belonged to the Land Revenue and Settlement Department, who were found extremely dauntless in committing high corruption and illegal malpractices The *Lakpas* used to go out every year in great state, and travelled about their respective *Panahs* surrounded by a horde of hungry followers, *who were practically billeted on the people* This was very unpopular and many complaints were made against the high-handedness of these officials and their followers So in the interest of the people it was thus decided to put a stop to it, and have all the revenue paid in Imphal But the system was not in favour with the *Lakpas* and their followers, because it meant a certain loss of illegal revenue to them, and consequently they had not tried to get the revenue in, they even retarded its coming in By his new system of permitting the *raiyats* to pay in their revenue direct to headquarters the Sub-Deputy Collector's inspections were confined to examining the work of the *Amins* and *Kanungos* But in January 1904, when Maxwell saw that very less amount were paid in, he was compelled to alter the system and return to the former method of collecting the revenue The question arose was it practicable to realise the revenue by inviting each tenant to come to headquarters and pay in his rent direct, and thus avoid the trouble of the Revenue officials attending at known centers and demanding payments? It was obvious that if this could be carried out a convenient solution of a "disagreeable duty" would be effected, but so long as human nature remained unchanged it was thought impracticable The word "human nature" was very specifically referred to the Manipuris whose habits, Maxwell described as under "[1]

'The Manipuri is notably a spendthrift, and in money matters is particularly careless always ready to borrow money but never prepared to pay his debts Of all the numerous races I know in India he is the last person who will accept an invitation to pay his taxes unless constantly interviewed

Raja Chura Chand was in Manipur throughout the year 1904 and he made long tours through the hills of the State, visiting several hill villages and on several occasions he toured through the valley At the request of Maxwell, the Raja had entirely removed himself from the *Rajbari*, where the influences were not of a kind suitable for the young Raja of his age and position He busily engaged himself in learning the duties he would be called upon to perform or to understand upon assuming the Manipur

Gadi It was in this year (1904) that the residents of the Imphal town who were physically backed by hundreds of Manipuri women had for the first time exhibited a widespread popular discontent and organized agitation against the order of the Political Agent Sir Robert Reid the Governor of Assam (1937 1942) termed the movement *NUPI LAN* or the women's war of Manipur

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER TWO

A New Raja of Manipur Under the British

1 The Political Agent Manipur to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam Shillong dated Manipur the 25th September 1890 printed in *Disturbances at Manipur* September 1890 p 5 [Assam Secretariat Proceedings Foreign A July 1891]

2 RI to *Disturbances at Manipur* September 1890 No 12 p 6

3 C U Aitchison (Comp) *A Collection of Treaties Engagements and Sanads* Vol II Revised and Continued upto the 1 June 1906 Calcutta 4 Edition 1909 pp 258 264

4 L Ibungohal Singh & N Khelchandra Singh Eds *Cheitharol Kumbaba* (Manipuri) (1967) 2 Edition 1989 Manipuri Sahitya Parishad Imphal p 503

Kings of Manipur showing a royal lineage to Maharaja Chura Chand Singh

Gharib Nawaz Maharaja	1709 1748
Chit Shai	1748 1752
Bharat Shai	1752 1753
Maramba Gourashyam	1753 1759 1762 1763
Bhagya Chandra	1759 1762 1763 1798
Labanya Chandra	1798 1801
Modhu Chandra	1801 1803
Chourjit	1803 1813
Marjit	1813 1819
Gambhir Singh	1826 1834
Chandrakirti	1834 1844 1850 1886
Nar Singh	1844 1850
Debendra	1850
Surchandra	1886 1890
Kulachandra	1890 1891
Chura Chand	1891 1941
Bodh Chandra	1941 1955

[See also matrilineal kinship of Maharaja Chura Chand Singh.]

Garib Nawaz Maharaja
[Maibam Chanu]



Ngoubra Mashai Senapati
[Moirangthem Chanu Ponglen Khombi
[Iwanglon Leiri Leishang Khombi]



Bhadra Singh
[Loktongbam Chanu Premlata &
[Yangangbam Chanu Padmabati]
*Premlata gave birth to Nar Singh [1844 1850]
*Padmabati gave birth to Debendra [1850]
[Wahengbam Chanu Rashni Queen to Nar Singh]



Bhagendra Singh [Alias Bhuban Jubaraj]
[Thokchom Chanu Kumari]



Chaobi Yaima
[Moirangthem Chanu Lalita Manjuri]



Chura Chand Singh [1891 1941]
[Chingakham Chanu Shyama Sakhi]



Bodh Chandra [1941 1955]

5 H St P Maxwell P A & Superintendent of the Manipur State *Administration Report of the Manipur Political Agency* for 1891 92 Dated 26 May 1892 p 9

6 See letter from Major H St P Maxwell I S C Political Agent & Superintendent of the State to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam No 99 dated Manipur the 13 May 1892

From the Speech by Major H St P Maxwell I S C Political Agent & Superintendent of the State dated 29 April 1892 made at the Investiture of the minor Raja Chura Chand

8 List showing the number of the Raja s slaves

Married Couples	394
Single Men	434
Male Children	288
Female Children	128
Widows	77
Old and Infirm Persons	10

9 See Maxwell s letter to the Chief Commissioner No 99 dated Manipur the 13th May 1892

10 H St P Maxwell Political Agent in Manipur & Superintendent of the State *Administration Report of the Political Agency* Manipur for the year 1894 95 No 123 p 4

11 Op Cit

12 Sir Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam* (From 1883-1941), A G P (G S) No 14, 1942,p 73

13 Captain H W G Cole, *Administration Report of the Political Agency, Manipur*, for the year 1896-97, No 51, p 3

14 Op Cit p 6

15 A Porteous, Esq , *Administration Report of the Political Agency, Manipur*, for the year 1897-98, No 112, p 5

16 See Diary of A Porteous, Esq , I C S , Officiating Political Agent in Manipur & Superintendent of the State, No 28, August 1897

17 Ashem Golap Singh, ***Lakpa*** of the ***Naharup Panah***, took a vital role in the outbreak of the agitation of 1904 when hundreds of Manipuri women staged and challenged the order of the Political Agent, which resuscitated the ***Lalup*** system He also acted an important part in the trial of Jubaraj Tikendrajit by being a go-between as he translated the English-text of the affidavit of Brajamohan Singh who was a Private Secretary to Jubaraj Tikendrajit, into Manipuri in the presence of Cockerell A Smith and Janaki Nath Bysak The English text of the affidavit of Brajamohan Singh was signed on 25th July 1891 Golap Singh explained the same sentence by sentence to Brajamohan Singh, the declarant, in the Manipuri language, and the declaring appeared to understand the same when so explained and signed the same in the Manipuri character "The contents of the declaration have been duly explained by me to the declarant, Brajamohan Sing, (Sic) in the Manipuri language, with which I am fully acquainted "-Golap Sing

18 H St P Maxwell, *Exemption of Brahmins and Rajkumars from Revenue* (a Note recorded by Lieutenant-Colonel Maxwell), dated 12th April 1898

19 H St P Maxwell, *Administration Report of the Political Agency*, Manipur, for the year 1898-99, No 70, p 7

20 Op Cit p 9

21 Op Cit p 9

22 See letter from I J Monahan, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, No 274, For P 2473, dated Shillong, the 13th June 1901

23 H St P Maxwell, *Administration Report of the Political Agency*, Manipur, for the year 1903-1904, No 53, p 2

CHAPTER THREE

(I)

Rajkumars and the Female ***Vox Populi***

Master Mind of the Arson Case of 1904

Dr.R.Brown wrote in his *Annual Report* of 1868-69 that the Manipuri women were very industrious and the women performed most of the work of the country except the heaviest, and they were, consequently, the mainstay of the family circle. Women did all the marketing, all the work of buying and selling in public, and the carrying to and fro of the articles to be sold.[1] It would be difficult, Brown plainly asserted, to find a more industrious woman in India than the Manipuri woman. Women conducted the marketing in the open air and collections of them were found throughout the capital. The principal meeting-place for the women-traders was a vacant plot of land (ground) to one side of the brick bridge, where the women congregated during the early part of the day, with their wares for sale. In the afternoon the market place was deserted, and the women all migrated to the side of the road leading to the Raja's enclosure, quite close to the gate and a very short distance from the brick bridge. The women had to remain exposed to rain or sun as no attempt was made to erect shelter of any kind. Dr. Brown estimated 300 as the number of women assembled in the afternoon bazar.

Due to heavy rainfalls in 1893 there occurred a big flood known for at least half a century in the Manipur valley. The banks of the Imphal river were breached in several places, and a large portion of the capital was under water for several days, causing a good deal of suffering to the inhabitants, who had to camp out on the roads or any high ground available until the water subsided. The Sadar Bazar and the Polo ground were both flooded to the depth of several feet. In the valley and town of Imphal however, the roads were thoroughly repaired by village labour. The brick-bridge across the Nambul river (referred to above) at the main entrance of the *pat*, which was partially destroyed in the heavy flood, was almost reconstructed. A fine strong wooden pile bridge was also constructed lower down the river. The market women formed the vast majority of travellers along the roads, and they were most keen in bringing any grievance to notice. If a bridge was washed away, the first information came from the women, and they were also not backward in reporting a bad piece of road.

The men, having to turn out and repair any damage, were anxious to conceal affairs.[2] In March 1897, a storm had demolished half of the huts in the women's daily (day) bazar. The Manipuri women clamoured for their immediate erection Until a year ago (1895-96), the women used to sit in the bazar without any shelter whatever, but since Colonel Maxwell erected huts for them, they were most particular as to their rights, and they even pointed to a small leak with pained surprise. H W G Cole once remarked, " Rather than face a storm of female indignation, important works were suspended until the huts could be put up again "[3]

The historic demonstration of the Manipuri women for their great dislike of the absolutist manner on the part of the British officials occurred in 1904 when Lieutenant-Colonel H.St P Maxwell issued an order to temporarily resuscitate the *Lalup* system for the purpose of making the inhabitants of the Imphal town to rebuild the Assistant Political Agent's *bungalow* which was burnt down Maxwell attributed the burning of the *bungalow* to incendiarism on the part of the Manipuri inhabitants of the Imphal town, instigated by the Rajkumars of the late ruling house, as a mark of showing their great dislike for Raja Chura Chand who was independently and by breaking the traditional line of primogeniture appointed by the British The objective of the townspeople, particularly the Rajkumars, in committing the political nuisance of incendiarism did not actually make targets towards the British administration but rather the townspeople, while accepting the British, showed their invidious feelings for the newly appointed minor Raja This was already evident a few years ago when the Government of India promulgated their Notification No 1862-E of 18th September 1891 Maxwell described the reaction of the people to the selection of Chura Chand as the Raja of Manipur in 1892

" The news was received with some amazement and disappointment The Manipuri populations were all in favour of the country being annexed to the British Empire and never for one instant expected that the country would be given back to them They supposed that Government would either permit the return of the ex-Maharaja Sur Chandra Singh, or nominate to the *Gadi* his only son Sura Chandra Singh, a lad of 12 years of age, residing at Manipur To this party the selection of a collateral branch to the Chiefship of Manipur came like a bombshell and, further, the choice falling on the youngest of five brothers made matters still less explainable "[4]

In fact, the people of the State had started enjoying the very essence of civilization like – good road communications, new bridges and rest-houses for the travellers of both Native and European, an improved drainage in the city of Imphal, a pure water supply, a totally modified land revenue system, new constructions on the Cachar-Manipur bridle road, the Manipur-Mao cart road, new buildings and *dak-bungalows*, public

health and sanitation dispensaries renovations of the Law Courts regular police postings and the introduction of western education etc 'It is not uncommon Maxwell proudly remarked ' to hear the people remark what a great improvement has been made in this respect during our administration The new amenities were non-existent and not even dreamed of during the time of the late Darbar

The disturbance of 1904 which was caused by a mob of 5 000 Manipuri men and women and which terrified the inhabitants and assumed a defiant attitude towards the Government could be traced back to the following causes

After midnight on the 15th March 1904 the State *bungalow* which was occupied by Captain Nuttall and Mr Dunlop[5] Assistant to the Political Agent was burnt to the ground The fire commenced from the verandah roof of the building and there was at the time a great suspicion of incendiarism Again after three and half months on 6th July the Khwairamban Bazar which contained 28 sheds with a seat capacity for 3 000 market women was completely destroyed by fire The destruction was so quick and although the air was quite still it was certain that the fire started in several places at the same time

After the second fire Maxwell became somewhat distrustful and he instituted enquiries whether anything had occurred to dissatisfy the people But he could learn nothing tending in this direction Trade was brisk the people said they had no complaints and all articles of food were cheap and plentiful and the weather was most seasonable for agriculture Police investigation also failed to detect the offenders Then in the night of 4th August (1904) the *bungalow* lately purchased by the State from Mr Mitchell Executive Engineer and in the occupation again of Captain Nuttall and Mr Dunlop was totally destroyed by fire In this instance there was positive proof of incendiarism as a bamboo with an oiled rag attached to it was discovered in the ruins Police enquiries elicited no clue, and still wishing to avoid saddling the people of Imphal with the blame which might only be attached to a few miscreants Maxwell offered a reward of Rs 500 to any person giving information which would lead to the conviction of the guilty parties

Mr Dunlop had told the Political Agent several days before (30th September 1904) that he utterly disbelieved the evidence against the persons who were arrested for the second *bungalow* fire Upon receiving information from Mr Dunlop Maxwell immediately issued an order on 12th September (1904) and submitted it to the Cherap Court for promulgation to the inhabitants of Imphal [6]

ORDER NO 17

Manipur the 12th September 1904

On the night of 15th March 1904 the Assistant Superintendent of State s *bungalow* was burnt down and incendiarism was suspected On the night of 4th August 1904 the *bungalow* lately belonging to Mr Mitchell Executive Engineer which had been purchased by the State and was occupied by the Assistant Superintendent of the State was again burnt down and this time there can be no doubt that an incendiary set it on fire A reward of Rs 500 was offered for information leading to the conviction of the guilty person or persons but without any clue being obtained As a preventive measure and proper punishment I consider it necessary to temporarily resuscitate *Lalup* in the town of Imphal for the purpose of rebuilding the house last burnt down With this order are enclosed

1 List showing the *Chowkidars* beats in Imphal and

2 List giving the materials required for rebuilding the house and the Chirap Court is requested to apportion the work among the several *Lekhais* exempting no one but the *Rajbari* foreigners members of the Panchayat and Chirap Courts and State servants

The State Engineer will arrange to take over the material collected and supervise the rebuilding operations [*Sic*]

H St P Maxwell Lieut Colonel I A C S I
Political Agent in Manipur and
Superintendent of the State

The idea of resuscitating the *Lalup* system in the Imphal valley certainly caused a feeling of disgust to the inhabitants who showed an *ad nauseam* They felt sure that the same Officer had already abolished the hateful system on 29th April 1892 at the time of the minor Raja s investiture This order therefore incited the people to protest and to collectively disobey the Political Agent s Notice Maxwell also knew that inhabitants of the Imphal town seemed very displeased at the order to rebuild the house last burnt down Meetings were being got up by the Rajkumars and they incited the people to resist Maxwell could not understand what grievance the people had that they should resort to incendiarism But it was the usual manner in Manipur of showing great dislike to authority In 1891 and 1892 so many foreigners houses were burnt down merely because they were British subjects, and that Maxwell had to send to Bengal for a professional tile maker The British then tiled their roofs and fires ceased Since then the Bengal tiles were replaced by corrugated iron except in the Cantonments where Allahabad tiles were used Unfortunately the two houses in which Captain Nuttall and Mr Dunlop lived were grass thatched

In the afternoon of the 27th September, some 400 Manipuris came to the Residency and they presented Maxwell with the petition below asking him to cancel his order of 12th September The main grievance was that the innocent were being punished for the guilty Maxwell explained the reasons which had compelled him to issue the order, and he pointed out that in the time of the late Darbar the loyalty of the inhabitants would have ensured detection of the culprits Maxwell expected the same spirit of loyalty in favour of the Government then administering the State The petition of the 27th September submitted by the inhabitants of the Imphal town was read as follows

We the subjects of Manipur have the honour to bring the following lines to the *Bara Sahib* of Manipur with reference to Your Honour s order concerning the burning of the State *bungalow* and that the subjects of Manipur should build it anew Our petition is that the *Bara Sahib* will be kind enough to cancel that order The reasons for praying so are given below

1 The order of the *Bara Sahib* that the subjects of Manipur are to rebuild the burnt *bungalow* has come as a severe blow to our heart and hence we present this petition with reference to that order

2 The English Government have protected us from 1891 to 1904 with paternal affection and has made no alteration in our former customs and usages and this fact is very pleasing to us the subjects of Manipur

That the inhabitants of Imphal are to rebuild the burnt *bungalow* has given us cause of grief and suspicion

4 If one does something wrong for which he deserves punishment and the punishment instead of falling on the offender falls on any other innocent person without taking evidence will not such a person be distressed at his heart by such treatment?

5 It has been announced that a reward of Rs 500 shall be given to those who can find out the person or persons who has or have set fire to the *bungalow* We deem it better for *Sarkar* to search out the offender or offenders itself We hear that some persons have been detected

6 Our fear is such that after dark we are afraid to approach the *bungalow* or to pass by the road near it not to speak of entering it

7 Our petition is that the *Bara Sahib* will be kind enough to cancel the order by which he is going to compel us to rebuild the burnt *bungalow* as a punishment under the *Lalup* system

8 We requested the Chirap Court to forward our petition to the *Bara Sahib* but they would not do so Our petition is concerning the above facts [Sic]

Maxwell returned the petition to the Cherap Court next day for intimation to the petitioners and said he was unable to alter his decision, and if the people declined to obey the order the only alternative was to post a punitive police force on the town as a punishment for incendiarism Maxwell s order of 28th September was issued as under -

ORDER

"I am unable to alter my decision, it is far easier for the people to bring to justice a criminal of this kind than the police, and, moreover, the police have tried hard to detect the offender. The inhabitants of Imphal have rural police (called *Chawkidars*) selected by themselves, and these men have also failed to arrest the incendiary or incendiaries.

"In 1891 when anything was done by the authorities which was disagreeable to the Manipuris, attempts to burn down houses were made, and the present is only a recrudescence of this national manner of showing ill-feeling. Unless the inhabitants of Imphal carry out the orders to rebuild the *bungalow*, a punitive police force will be posted in the town, and the inhabitants will have to pay monthly the cost of the force."

There was a spirit of unrest throughout the town and the Rajkumars incited the people on no account to work at the *bungalow*. Manipuris moved about in groups of 30 and 40, and fairly large meetings were held and rumour of an absurd kind circulated. Maxwell, in the meantime, had ordered up 2,000 British troops to Manipur, and two companies of Europeans were already seen in Silchar.

During the time of the late Darbar when an unpalatable order was issued to the inhabitants of the Imphal valley, they used to have recourse to mob meetings, which in the case of a firm ruler were at once nipped in the bud by force, and in the case of a weak ruler the action of the people was sufficient to intimidate authority and gain the reversal of the objectionable mandate. On more than one occasion this method of intimidating authority was tried after Maxwell had assumed administration of the State and was at once suppressed. In the same manner, as soon as the order calling upon the inhabitants of Imphal to rebuild the burnt *bungalow* was promulgated, the old custom came to the front. The Rajkumars of the town, who were all along disloyal to the British Government (because the British rule did not permit them to enslave and ill-treat the poorer inhabitants, and when inmates of the jail the Rajkumars were treated on the same terms as other convicts), sent round the town a verbal notice saying on no accounts to obey the order of the Political Agent, but to at once follow the usual course and agitate. Shortly groups of 30 or 40 men were seen parading the roads in all directions, and when asked what they were doing they replied nothing. The more orderly of the inhabitants came to the Political Agent and presented the petition of 27th September. On hearing the result of this petition, the Rajkumars called larger gatherings together, and many well-attended meetings were held at night. The atmosphere became gradually more serious, as the groups became more concentrated and insolent remarks were made to many of

the Government officials Maxwell then issued the following on 30th September 1904

Notice to the Inhabitants of Imphal

'Whereas certain ill conditioned persons in the town of Imphal are inducing the residents to assemble in fixed places with a view to agitate against authority this is to give notice to all that more persons than five assembling in one place for the purpose will be considered an unlawful assembly and that the Superintendent of the State will call upon the troops and police to disperse such assembly

It was found of no avail, and though some hundreds of people read the order, which was posted up in many parts of Imphal, on 30th September itself from midday till 4 p m the Manipuri inhabitants of the Imphal valley in twos and threes were seen on all the roads and all heading for one direction Over 4,000 men had collected by 3 p m and as the meeting place was within 50 yards of the Sadar Bazar the shopkeepers were at once in a state of terror and expected every moment to have the bazar looted They hurriedly came and reported the matter to Maxwell who was also solicited for help from other quarters where the British subjects resided Maxwell came to the conclusion that the time had arrived to take measures for the safety of the British subjects (native and European) in Manipur and to show the Manipuris that *there was a limit to British patience*

As the people continued gathering more in number Maxwell sent orders three times to the mob to disperse, but the only effect it had was to add to the numbers He then visited the officer commanding the station and asked him for a force of sepoys sufficient to overawe the unlawful assembly He next went to the police lines and told off small guards to attend at the houses of the European officers under the civil administration and at the quarters where most of the State officials resided Maxwell ordered 50 police sepoys to put on their uniform, arm themselves with sticks and to proceed at once to the evening bazar and wait his arrival In the meantime the crowd had heard the alarm and assembly sound in the military lines close by and they commenced partly to disperse As soon as the people saw the force marching in their direction at the place of the meeting, the people were hurriedly on the run Maxwell ordered the police to arrest, if possible, the ringleaders or any persons of note amongst the crowd, but no important arrests were made He made a search in the houses of the locality where he thought perhaps some weapons or *lathis* might be collected, but without success Within half an hour the force had withdrawn, and Maxwell sent a police force of 20 rank and file to patrol at night the non-Cantonment side of the British Reserve

After the ill-success, Maxwell firmly believed that, the inhabitants of the Imphal valley would return to their peaceful avocation and quietly carry out the order to rebuild the *bungalow*. He also presumed that the quantity of materials required from the respective circles of the Imphal inhabitants and the value would come to little less than three annas a compound, and as each compound comprised two or three houses with an average of three male adults, it was clear that the cost to the people of the order was not a point under consideration, but it was merely the dislike to execute an order which had not their approval. In his letter to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, No.373 of 1st October 1904, Maxwell wrote:

> "I have done nothing to enforce my order except to inform the inhabitants of Imphal that, in default of obeying it, they will suffer greater pecuniary loss and undergo more inconvenience by having a punitive police force posted at their expense in the town, and the meaning of such a force is well known to the majority of adult inhabitants of Imphal."

No firearms could be seen in the hands of the mob, but many people carried sticks of an ugly appearance. Though Maxwell never expected any direct attack from the disturbers, he felt sure that, had they not been quickly dispersed the Sadar Bazar as well as many houses in the occupation of native subjects of the Crown would have been looted. He was actually astounded at the wonderful manner news was sent round to collect among the agitating mass, and he believed that there must be a well-arranged plan to defy authority under some experienced leaders.

A number of people had claimed themselves to be in direct involvement in the arson case but it seemed that they came forward in the hope of obtaining the reward. Mr J G Dunlop made enquiries and he submitted some names of the alleged miscreants, like - Ashem Golap Singh, Nipa Macha, Chaoba, Satpa Mithong, Haobam Chaoba, Chirom Thabal, Loitongbam Yaima and Atomba etc., with his observations that the stories looked highly fabricated. Maxwell also had no faith on the evidence of the persons who confessed to having committed the crime of burning down the *bungalow*. Manipuris seemed to think very lightly of the offence and to expect a sentence of imprisonment not exceeding two years, and hence the fear was expressed to the Political Agent at the time the reward was offered that for the sake of attaining the reward some persons would certainly come forward and confess to the crime.

In addition to the false story of accomplices, Maxwell argued, another reason was found prevalent, which well illustrated Manipuri intrigue and chicanery by throwing the blame of the whole affair upon Raja Chura Chand, who, owing to circumstances in which he was in no

manner concerned, was unpopular with the great majority of his subjects. After the rebellion of 1891, the Government of India ordered the removal of the ruling family of Manipur from the Chieftainship of the State, and selected Chura Chand for that position. But the people of Imphal, where the upper and middle classes of Manipuris resided, had never loyally accepted this decision, and the incendiary occasion of 1904 was only an instance where by a side issue they could express their great dislike to the order of the Paramount Power Maxwell considered that a most cowardly and false attempt was made upon the integrity and loyalty of Raja Chura Chand

When Maxwell returned from leave he found the young Raja living in the *Rajbari*, and knowing only too well that for a young man of his age the surroundings were unsatisfactory, he asked the Raja to live in the house which was originally built for his temporary occupation while home for his holidays from the Mayo College Captain Nuttall, his tutor, resided in the next compound and he was in a better position to guide the young Raja in his studies and daily life This also enabled the Political Agent to see more of the Raja and to permit him to more clearly report to the Government what progress the Raja was making, and on this report his assumption of administrative powers in the State had to rest Chura Chand at once saw that Maxwell's advice was entirely to his advantage and he accepted it with pleasure, and thus lived in the house very happily with his eldest brother Dumbra Singh, to whom he seemed much attached To burn down his tutor's house so that the tutor might occupy the Raja's house and he in turn might go back into the *Rajbari* and when that plan failed, to set fire to the second house to which the tutor had gone was beyond belief And, moreover, it was still hard to credit when at the time there were no less than six empty houses in the station available for the tutor's occupation It was obvious to everyone that Chura Chand had the greatest respect and affection for his tutor and the greatest confidence existed between them

Incendiarism was not unknown in Manipur. The State diary recorded instances of the Raja's palace inside the citadel being destroyed by ill-conditioned persons for some imaginary grievance; and in 1891-92, when the task fell upon British officers to bring under discipline and into order the ill-disposed and sullen inhabitants of the Imphal town, the houses of British subjects were constantly fired by the Manipuris. Maxwell could not readily solve the mystery of the fire, but with an effort to maintain face-saving prestige of the Paramount Power he had to show himself a 'Political Supremo' to the local inhabitants:'

"Whether this disrespect is directed against the Government or against the Raja or against any other particular individual I am unable to say I know of no cause for dissatisfaction but I consider some measures should be taken to impress upon the Manipuri inhabitants of Imphal, that punishment must follow such a course of conduct"

The Chief Commissioner of Assam well knew that Maxwell's order of resuscitating the *Lalup* system on the townspeople of Imphal in the rebuilding operation of the burnt *bungalow* might not have been judicious, but he had to uphold it The trouble was evidently political and the outcome of opposition to Raja Chura Chand He however, ordered the arrest of any ringleader including the much agitated Rajkumars of the Imphal valley There was a sign of 'increasing determination' to resist authority, and by 5th October 1904, the Political Agent hurriedly requested the Chief Commissioner to send two hundred Military Police from Kohima But the arrest of six ringleaders on the same day (5th October) and their confinement in the quarter-guard of the regiment brought matters in different course and the people started asking for pardon, their disposition completely changed and even large number of bamboos for the *bungalow* were voluntarily brought in The arrested Rajkumars were given strict warning by the Chief Commissioner that in case trouble continued, they would be exiled permanently from the State This made them quite thrown over and disregarded by the valley people The disturbance was actually caused by the old revolutionist Rajkumars who noticed the reduction of the garrison, and who thought that the British could not put more than three hundred men in the fighting line, and the cart-road being closed, they imagined the British could get no assistance But since the ringleaders were arrested and other prompt measures taken, their followers were totally disheartened and all opposition had ceased and people started asking for pardon Rush was made to carry in material for the *bungalow* and half the available supply was already collected in the first week of October 1904

In the morning of 2nd October 1904, Maxwell went out for a walk with Raja Chura Chand who seemed extremely frightened of being assassinated They spoke to a number of women whom they happened to meet on the road, and told them to recommence the *hats*, and several at their advice took the usual seats at the Moirangkhom market A short time after returning home, Dumbra Singh, the Raja's eldest brother brought to Maxwell a Manipuri Brahmin whom he arrested On enquiry it was found that the Brahmin had incited the women at Moirangkhom to leave the market place at once, or it would be bad for them Men like the Brahmin had actually induced the women-folk not to attend the markets most convenient for the British subjects People moved about in suspicious groups, and quite a big crowd assembled outside the Cherap Court on 3rd

October. As they remained on the further side of the two bridges, the Political Agent merely kept a watch on their movements, but he paraded the town *Chawkidars* and explained to them their duties as public servants. The *Chawkidars* plainly stated that the majority of their *leikais* were in favour of the Government, but the Rajkumars told them to disobey orders. It seemed that the British were reducing their regular and police force to a dangerous point, and this had attracted the attention of the disaffected Rajkumars who thought the time was come to show their *Colours*.

In the first week of October there was very little movement among the people. The members of the Cherap and Panchayet Courts came to see the Political Agent on 4th October, and said they were doing their best to quiet the minds of the people and hoped the Political Agent would be merciful. He told them he had known the Manipuris all those years and he was perfectly astounded at their conduct: they had either to rebuild the burnt *bungalow* or the whole community would suffer. They declined to accept either. The members simply informed Maxwell that the inhabitants had already commenced collecting materials for the *bungalow*, but the miscreant Rajkumars ordered them to desist.

(II)

Women took up the Cudgel for the People's behalf

There was violent agitation and demonstrations by the market women had to be dispersed by force — Sir Robert Reid

Whether or no political or otherwise, the women were led by the simple thought that their husbands had refused to undergo the *Lalup* labour which now became an illegal one, and thereby causing the hardships of punishment on the women's lot. Both the men and women of the country thought the British *Persona non grata*, and, moreover, the Political Agent had exercised powers regardless for the prevalent customs and traditions of the Manipuris and he certainly endeavoured an interference with the existing institutions. The inconvenience caused to the innocent people of the Imphal valley was much regretted and despised by the working women and it were they who made strong protest against the order of the British Government. On a historic day of 5th October 1904, as soon as the Political Agent returned from his morning walk he found some 3,000 Manipuri women gathering in his compound and in a very few minutes 2,000 or 3,000 more had arrived and all commenced shouting at once.[8] With his two *Chaprasis* and much exertion the Political Agent at last managed to silence them and got them seated. The women said that their husbands

had refused to work at the *bungalow*, and as they (the women) were the bread winners, the cost of the *Lalup* labour would fall on them Fifteen police came to the Political Agent s assistance, and shortly afterwards as the women showed temper, Maxwell sent for another 30-armed police But there in the campus the large crowd of women remained in front of the Residency shouting and yelling a slogan which was evidently anti-British in its characteristic Maxwell at the time did not fully understand the nature of the Manipuri women who in the outward simply looked as docile and submissive to their male sex (It would not be surprising why Maxwell himself felt trapped to a beautiful Manipuri Rajkumari[9] despite his being an anti-Rajkumars of the State) Although truth would not always be very palatable whether or no Maxwell realized the nature of the women when he made the following comment it was highly doubtful and it looked extremely partial

> Their male partners had sent them to put pressure on me and when the Jubraj (Tikendrajit) was hanged in 1891 some 8 000 or 10 000 women crowded round the scene of the execution and had to be roughly treated before they fell back On this latter occasion (5th October 1904) they had been paid to make the demonstration to try and induce us to pardon the offender

After two hours of hard trial Maxwell and his posse of military policemen had somehow managed to persuade the rabble of women to leave the compound and in doing this the Cherap and the Panchayet members afforded Maxwell much assistance In his Diary of 5th October 1904 Maxwell wrote down a VERY SORRY REMARK as regards Manipuri women like *It is very difficult to know how to treat a mob of wild cats like this but I shall take care to disperse them next time before they become numerous*

The Civil Police in plain clothes made secret arrangements to apprehend the Rajkumar ringleaders [11] All the Cantonment roads and others leading to the British civil quarters were closed, and the Imphal *Chawkidars* who knew the police by sight were called in the *Thana* and kept there Rajkumar Kala Sana, the chief ringleader, who had sworn to die before being captured, and who of course knew he was wanted and with many others, was entirely surprised and all the ringleaders were captured on 5th October and were quickly removed to the *Police Thana*

The inhabitants of the Imphal town were found sulking in their houses, and apparently were somewhat astonished at the arrests of the ringleaders The women now came out to take up the cudgels on behalf of the men and they certainly gave considerable trouble All day the women tried to force the guards closing the roads to the civil and military stations,

and several Manipuri police were injured Unless they desisted there would be loss of life The fact was, the men fearful of being shot by the police, asked the women to come forward to make believe the grievance from which they suffered was great On 6th October, a band of Manipuri women went round the town and informed their sex that the Cherap Court had ordered all the women in Manipur under pain of 8 annas each fine to proceed at a certain hour to the Political Agent's bungalow, that, they would open the bazar again provided Maxwell would cancel his orders regarding the *bungalow* and the punitive police force

On 7th October members of the Cherap and the Panchayet Courts visited the Political Agent and they reported that all trouble was at an end and from that day a bazar with Muslim women sellers was established in the Police lines Towards evening, many of the inhabitants from different *leikais* carried in bamboos to rebuild the burnt *bungalow* although nothing further since the original order was said to them on the subject which showed that the Rajkumars were utterly discredited In a late report despatched to Mr J B Fuller the Chief Commissioner of Assam Maxwell revealed that Raja Chura Chand was very frightened at first and for some days before 30th September (1904) the Raja had never slept in his own bedroom but here and there in the compound On 30th the Raja wanted to live with the Political Agent but the latter told him that if a Manipuri Raja showed fear he would never be able to manage refractory subjects Maxwell had several times taken him out walking with him to show the people that he was not afraid The four brothers and the grandfather were living together since 30th September and Dumbra Singh the eldest brother had given assistance to the Political Agent

The trouble of 1904 was really caused by the truculent Rajkumars among whom the ringleader Kala Sana was much feared by the people and it was thought that there could be no certainty of peace in the State until the ruffian was deported Maxwell had time after time inflicted punishment of *Lalup* upon the Manipuris and it was the only occasion that any resentment was shown [17] By the middle of October all went on peacefully as usual and the Manipuris were found busy bringing in the material for the *bungalow* With the approval of the Chief Commissioner, Maxwell actually wanted to drive the Rajkumars out of Manipur They would have to make their own living in the best way they could either in Cachar, Sylhet, Nabadwip or Brindaban, in one of which places they would be sure to live But by deporting them to any fixed place with an allowance only enhanced their reputation and set an example of evil to others

The ministers of the late Manipur Darbar who were released from the Andamans, where they were sent after the rebellion of 1891, were simply cast into the world elsewhere than Manipur, Cachar and Sylhet, a measure which they greatly disliked. It was understood that a Manipuri Rajkumar preferred a small allowance in exile to living in his own country, where he had to earn his bread. Bara Chaoba and Megzing (the culprit) when in exile in Hazaribagh had petitioned the Government piteously to be permitted to return to Manipur, and when sanction was given and the Deputy Commissioner of the place had arranged to escort them to Manipur, they asked what allowance they were to receive in Manipur, and on being told the allowances would cease, at once said, 'then we prefer to remain here' but *nolens volens* they were sent on. Rajkumar Kala Sana's eldest brother was *Wangkheirakpa* who had rebelled against Maharaja Sur Chandra and was killed with two sons in the mutiny. Kala Sana on this occasion was wounded and escaped to Cachar. When Kula Chandra became the Regent of Manipur on his elder brother vacating the *Gadi*, the deceased's next brother Maipak Singh was appointed *Wangkheirakpa* who was prominent in the rebellion against Government in March 1891. He was sentenced to transportation and forwarded to the Andamans. Kala Sana hid for some time after the British had arrived to suppress the rebellion but as his brother was of senior rank no further notice was taken of him.

The younger brother of Kala Sana had also tried to get up a similar agitation against the Sub-Deputy Collector[11] and the payment of revenue and he had collected 400 men on the Polo ground to make the attack. But Maxwell had soon driven the party off and the ringleader escaped to Cachar where he became a mendicant on account of the easy life. In his letter to the Chief Commissioner of Assam dated 12th October 1904 (No 389) Maxwell wrote "There is no difficulty in keeping such men out of Manipur and the days of collecting a small band of men in Silchar, arming them and marching on Imphal and starting a revolution are past."

As the inhabitants of the Imphal town had started building the *bungalow* by carrying out the *Lalup* punishment ordered by Maxwell he did not propose inflicting any further punishment. The women who were the bread-winners of every Manipuri family would really have paid for the proposed punitive force, but the labour of rebuilding the *bungalow* fell on the men's lot only.

The *bungalow* that was burnt was previously occupied by Captain Nuttall and J G Dunlop (Assistant Superintendent of Manipur) but the

former was not then in the station Mr Dunlop held an enquiry and examined his own servants, Captain Nuttall's servant and those of the Raja who was a neighbour Nothing of importance could be elicited As a piece of bamboo with one end covered with a half-burnt oiled rag was discovered next morning close to where the fire had originated (the east side of the building which formed Captain Nuttall's quarters and which was empty at the time) and as the building known as the *Chota Bungalow* was similarly burnt to the ground on the night of 15th-16th March (1904), there was no doubt that the fire was due to incendiarism

The man who first gave a clue to the fire was a native resident of Imphal and a Chairman of the Local Panchayet Court[14] Though the information collected by Mr Dunlop was found a little inaccurate the alleged culprit was Ashem Golap Singh Maharaja Chandra Kirti Singh had appointed him an Agent in Calcutta to the Manipur State with the rank of Major and he was still a resident there at the time of the rebellion of March 1891 In January 1893 Maxwell found him in Calcutta living with the three brothers of Maharaja Sur Chandra Singh and in compliance with the orders of the Government of India Maxwell had accompanied the Rajkumars[15] and located them at Radha Kund In carrying out this duty Maxwell received much assistance from Golap Singh who owing to a long residence in Bengal was proficient in Hindustani and Bengali and was a man of considerable intelligence

On return from furlough in 1894 Maxwell found Golap Singh in Manipur and in May 1895 upon the reorganization of the revenue system he appointed Golap to be a *Lakpu* of one of the four *Panahs* In December 1897 he was convicted by Mr Porteous officiating Political Agent of embezzlement of State money and was sentenced to a term of six months simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs 500 On the visit of the Chief Commissioner to the State in February 1898 Golap Singh after three months incarceration was released on account of his past good service, and he lived quietly and in some poverty in Imphal His considerable knowledge of the past history, customs and folklore of Manipur was utilized from time to time, and he gradually warmed himself into favour In September 1902 Major Woods, officiating Political Agent, appointed Golap Singh to be a member of the Town Panchayet Since taking up the duties, the work of the Court under his more experienced guidance had shown much improvement In his "Letter of Identification and Recommendation" to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Maxwell wrote as under [16]

"Golap Singh is without contradiction the most intelligent Manipuri in the State, but full of deceit and intrigue like all his countrymen and is a staunch adherent of the late ruling family, under whom he served for so many years His Highness the Raja has an intense dislike to him, and after the present contemptible attempt to charge His Highness with a serious crime, it would, I think, be advisable to remove Golap Singh from the State "

The Chief Commissioner also believed that Golap Singh must have been concerned in the false charge made against the Raja's servants He, therefore, ordered Golap's suspension from the Panchayet While making his recommendations on the 'Arson Case' to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, in his Letter No 2C, dated Shillong, the 19[th] October 1904, the Chief Commissioner Mr J B Fuller stressed the following arguments

The grounds upon which Maxwell's order was issued were that

- The burning of the *bungalow* was due to incendiarism,
- There were similar previous cases, and an important attempt was made to implicate the Raja and his household in the commission of the crime

The Chief Commissioner had no reason whatever to doubt the correctness of the conclusion that the bungalow had been fired On information received by Mr J G Dunlop, he interrogated a convict named Nipa Macha, who stated that he could name the offenders The convict was sent out under a guard to interview the persons he indicated Under very suspicious circumstances he induced two men to admit their complicity and to charge two of the Raja's servants (Satpa Mithong and Loitongbam Yaima) in terms, which implied that they were acting under the Raja's orders The Chief Commissioner had no doubt that the charge was false and was got up by enemies of the Raja.

It was more than probable that the false charge was instigated by some of the Rajkumars representing senior branches of the ruling family who were strongly opposed to Raja Chura Chand. He was the youngest member of a family that belonged to a collateral branch, and that was in exceedingly poor circumstances at the time he was selected for succession Moreover, the Raja had turned out to be a youth of weak character and he possessed little, if any, influence with the people, whose sympathy was with the representatives of the late ruling family The description of the six Rajkumars as was given by Colonel Maxwell showed that three of them were actively concerned in previous intrigues; and that the other three were closely connected with men who had aspired to the succession Kala Sana was a particularly dangerous man

The disturbance was not of very great importance except as evidencing the existence of a faction in the State, which might render its administration exceedingly difficult; and in so far as the agitation brought this fact to light, the results might indeed be beneficial. The acquaintance which the Chief Commissioner had gathered of Manipur affairs had rendered him somewhat apprehensive of the future of the State under a Raja who, so far from possessing the confidence of the people, was actually looked down upon by them, and who was beset by a large number of influential and unscrupulous men who represented, in popular ideas, the days of independence and of heroism.

It appeared expedient that men who were suspected of having fomented disaffection in the "Arson Case" of 1904 should not be permitted to reside in the State, and the Chief Commissioner recommended that an order of banishment should be passed against such of the six Rajkumars (Kala Sana, Megzing Singh, Matum Sana, Chamu Sana, Loitam Sanajaoba and Rajkumar Thangkokpa), as might be unable for them to show good cause against it. Colonel Maxwell was opposed to the grant of any allowance to the exiles conditionally upon their living at Hazaribagh or Brindaban, as experience had shown that Rajkumars preferred a small allowance in exile to earning their living at home. But the Chief Commissioner had reserved authority to sanction the grant of a small allowance (if special reason could be shown for the concession), and if the recipient agreed to reside at a place appointed for his residence. Subject to the approval of the Government of India, the Chief Commissioner proposed to authorise the Political Agent of Manipur to banish from the State such of the six Rajkumars.

In taking proceedings against the Raja's servants, Mr. J.G.Dunlop acted on the suggestion of the Chairman of the Town Panchayet Court. He recorded, "On the day after the fire, the Sub-Inspector of Police had informed me of his belief that Satpa Mithong, in view of his bad character, was the culprit; and the same opinion was subsequently expressed by the Chairman of the Local Panchayet."[17] It was ascertained that the name of the man was Ashem Golap Singh. In the circumstances he could not but be suspected of having had a hand in the intrigues of the "**Arson Case.**"

By the first week of November 1904, the Government of India had sanctioned banishment of the six Rajkumars and Ashem Golap Singh from the Manipur State.[18] But each of them had first to be called upon to

show cause against the measure The following were the statements given by the Defendant Rajkumars on the 4th and 5th November 1904 -

1] Megzing Singh son of Maharaja Nar Singh, age 65 of Thingom Leikai Imphal

I remember the day when the troops were called upon to quell a disturbance near the *Pucca* Bridge I was in my house all that day Some 3 or 4 days prior to this Bindu Madhab Brahmin and my younger brother Pangaton called me to come and sign a petition to the Superintendent of the Manipur State asking for relief from having to rebuild the *bungalow* that was burnt in Mr Mitchell s compound I went to the *Mandab* (dancing hall) in a compound just opposite the Cherap Court and signed the petition

I know nothing more

I joined my elder brother Bora Chaoba in a revolution against the succession of Maharaja Sur Chandra and was apprehended in Cachar and exiled by the India Government to Hazaribagh where I was 8 or 10 years and then was permitted to return to Manipur

2] Thangkokpa Singh son of Raja Debendra Singh age over 50 of Wangkheirakpam Leikai, Khurai Imphal

I remember the day when the troops were called upon to quell a threatened disturbance near the *Pucca* Bridge A few days before my brother Pangaton (really 1st cousin as Pangaton is the son of Raja Nar Singh elder brother of Raja Debendra Singh) called me to sign a petition asking for relief from building a *bungalow* in Mr Mitchell s compound which had been destroyed by fire I went to the *Mandab* opposite the Cherap Court and duly signed and on another day I signed a similar petition to the Cherap Court The first petition was to the Superintendent of the State On 30th September I was told there was to be a meeting on the same subject and I went to the meeting and after some time I heard that the Political Agent was coming with some *Sipahis* and I at once left and as I had gone some distance I saw the *Sipahis* and hurried home Pangaton asked me to come to the meeting I cannot say who called the other people together I have never taken part in any revolutions in Manipur My chief occupation is singing at religious ceremonies

3] Matum Singh son of Rajkumar Pitambar Singh age 61 of Mantri Leikai Imphal

I remember the day when the troops were called upon to quell a disturbance near the *Pucca* Bridge A few days before Rajkumar Pangaton called me to attend a meeting and sign a petition against building the burnt *bungalow* I did not attend or sign

On the day the *Sipahis* came I had business at the Cherap Court where I had a Civil suit and I went at 1 p m but the Court was not sitting

I was called over the way to a meeting and asked to sign a petition about the burnt *bungalow* but I declined to sign and went back to the Cherap Court where I remained until the members came In the evening when the troops arrived I was in the Court I did not hear of or see any notice prohibiting meetings in Imphal

4] Kala Singh son of Rajkumar Sajouba Singh (Senapati) age 56 of Bachispati Leikai Uripok Imphal

I heard that on 30 September a meeting was to be held at the *Pucca* Bridge to ask the Political Agent to withdraw his order to rebuild the burnt *bungalow* At noon I went there but saw an order calling upon the people not to assemble as such a course was forbidden I then went away Later in the day when the troops came I was at Luban (?) *Selungba* s house some 500 yards beyond the *Pucca* Bridge I never called any of the meetings Two or three occasions before the 30 September I attended the meetings to arrange a petition for relief from building the *bungalow*

I cannot say who called the mass meeting on 30 I did not I was concerned in the rebellion against Maharaja Sur Chandra led by my eldest brother the *Wangkheirakpa* who was killed with three sons and others of the family I was taken prisoner and later on was released

Another brother of mine was appointed *Wangkheirakpa* by the Regent Kula Chandra and he was convicted of rebellion in March 1891 against the British Government and was sentenced to transportation He is now dead I was *Sagol Hanjaba* (Master of Horse) in March 1891 and was in hiding for some months after the troops arrived in April 1891

5] Loitam Sanajaoba son of Sana Tomba and grandson of Raja Debendra Singh age 37 of Lourenpurel Leikai Imphal

On the 30 September I went to attend the mass meeting at the *Pucca* Bridge and on arrival heard that an order had been issued by the Political Agent prohibiting the meeting and I then went away When the troops came to disperse the assembly I was half a mile away *en route* to my house

A petition had been presented to the Political Agent asking for relief from rebuilding the burnt *bungalow* and I went on that day (30 September) to the Cherap Court to learn what the result was I did not call any meeting and cannot say why so many persons were gathered there

6] Chamu son of Isethanba age 31 of Mantri Mayum Leikai Sagolband Imphal

On 30 September 1904 I was at home all day and know nothing about the mass meeting at the *Pucca* Bridge On 2 or 3 occasions prior to the 30 I attended meetings with a view to present a petition to the Political Agent for relief from rebuilding the burnt *bungalow*

I cannot say why the meeting was held on 30 nor can I say who called the people together I am a Rajkumar my grandfather was *Kotwal* in the reign of Maharaja Chandra Kirti Singh prior to the appointment to that office of late Tikendrajit Senapati

The defence statements offered by the six Rajkumars were found not adequate and witnesses also proved their presence at meetings Their behaviour and defiant open statements made before the public all corroborated in the versions of the witnesses who made the following on 9th November 1904 before Maxwell in the Court of the Political Agent

1st Witness Pandit Bindu Madhab son of Kosesur Shastri Manipur Brahmin of Imphal

I remember the day the troops came to disperse the large mob assembled near the *Pucca* Bridge. Some days before a large number of persons assembled at the Cherap Court in order to draw up a petition to the Political Agent for relief from rebuilding Mr. Mitchell's *bungalow*. The defendant Rajkumars were all present. A Committee was held to draw up the petition. *The relief was only required for the Rajkumars and Brahmins.* A petition was drawn up and taken to the Political Agent who declined to assent to the relief.

The next day a very large number of persons were drawn up near the Cherap Court and the defendant Rajkumars were present and were considered from their position in Manipur as leading men. I spoke to the assembly and said that the Political Agent had declined to exempt any from the work and that we must obey and that we should try and collect subscriptions to carry out the work and so all would be well. The defendant Rajkumars and others said "**No! We will not do the work, nor subscribe**" and they began to laugh and jeer at me. I was ashamed and went away. The defendant Rajkumars laughed at me and they told me I was a donkey and timid. On the 30 September I did not attend any meeting. At the meeting at which I spoke I advised the people not to collect in numbers or the police would come and arrest them but they merely laughed and said "**Let the police come.**"

I heard that the defendant Rajkumars among others took the oath at the temple of Hodam Chaoba of Uripok that they would never obey the order to rebuild the *bungalow*. I was not present. The Rajkumars and Brahmins do *Lalup* on the road like other people. I am a leading Brahmin in Manipur and have travelled in many countries.

2nd Witness Pangaton son of Raja Nar Singh age 66 of Achom Leikai Uripok Imphal

I remember the day the *Sipahis* came to disperse the mob assembled at the *Pucca* Bridge. I was present at the meeting and the six defendant Rajkumars were also present. The defendants said that under no circumstances would they carry out the Political Agent's order and advised all to remain firm. I became frightened and went home. Shortly afterwards I heard the *Sipahis* had come and dispersed the mob. Four or five days previous to this day people assembled in numbers near the Cherap Court. I cannot say who called them.

At one meeting I hard someone ask the defendants what they should do if the police came to make them work or arrest them and the defendants replied "**Let the police come, we will never work**". At this meeting the door of the Temple of Hodam Chaoba where the meeting was held was thrown open and the defendants and others took the oath that they would die first rather than carry out the Political Agent's order.

My eldest brother (Megjing) was present and so I could not be the leader of the mob. I cannot say who was considered leader.

3rd Witness Roton Singh son of Rajkumar Dharma Setu Senapati age 50 of Thangmeiband Leikai Imphal

When we received the order from the Cherap Court to work on the burnt *bungalow* we all the people of every description wanted relief and so we collected near the Cherap Court to present a petition. The petition was presented and the request refused. Another large meeting was held at Hodam Chaoba's compound and at the meeting both Bindu Madhab and I proposed to the people to collect subscriptions

and have the house built by contract but the six defendant Rajkumars and many others laughed us down and said they would never subscribe nor build the house I was jeered at and left the meeting

At this meeting before I left the door of the Temple was thrown open and led by the defendants the people took oath that they would not carry out the order to rebuild the *bungalow* On the day the *Sipahis* came to disperse the meeting I was present early in the day and I saw the defendant Rajkumars at the meeting I went away before the *Sipahis* came

The correct procedure followed by the petitioners when some 300 or 400 Manipuris of Imphal came to the Residency and presented Maxwell with the petition on 27th September (1904) was discontinued by the Rajkumars who seemed determined to resist all orders After several angry and unnecessary large gatherings of the people at which speeches of all sort were made but mostly advising them to stand firm and resist orders a very large meeting of about four or five thousand persons was held on 30th September 1904 at the *Pucca* Bridge And though ordered by the Political Agent to disperse both by written proclamation and by word of mouth of police officers sent for the purpose the mob became more threatening and by evening fearing that the assembly would get entirely out of hand and commence to loot the houses of the British subjects close by as darkness came on Maxwell was obliged to disperse the mob by force

The six defendant Rajkumars were arrested as the ringleaders of the mob who tried to induce the inhabitants of Imphal to resist authority Their names were the talk of the town at the time and the evidence had confirmed the rumour and it showed that they had used violent means by taking oath at a temple and called upon the people to do the same to disobey authority and advised the people by oratorical efforts to stand firm The witnesses also proved that all attempt at compromise was ineffectual by the antagonistic attitude of the Rajkumars and their boast to let the police come and arrest them could only mean they were determined to resist On 10th November 1904 Maxwell recorded the following extract in an Order which he submitted for approval to the Chief Commissioner of Assam

The Manipuri people are of an excitable and credulous character and are easily led astray by loud talk and a small beginning of little importance soon culminates in a serious matter and had measures not been taken to show the mob that law and order would be enforced the action encouraged by the defendants might have entailed serious consequences In a State so lately recovered from a gross act of rebellion unfortunately at first partially successful against the British Government a threatened disturbance like the present requires more attention than in a district where good order has prevailed for many years and *it is important that the revolutionary tendencies of the Manipuris*

should be checked and they should thoroughly understand that any irregular attempt to resist authority which may entail loss of life or property to others will be thoroughly suppressed."

The defendant Rajkumars, Maxwell considered, were a menace to the good government of the Manipur State, and the 1st defendant Megzing Singh and the 4th defendant Kala Singh were old offenders, and he, therefore, ordered with the approval of the Government that -

1st defendant Megzing Singh,
2nd defendant Thangkokpa Singh,
3rd defendant Matum Singh,
4th defendant Kala Singh,
5th defendant Loitam Sanajaoba, and
6th defendant Chamu Singh

were at once banished from the Manipur State. Maxwell issued the banishment order on 13th November 1904, and by which the Rajkumars had to go to Lakhipur in the Cachar District. The Chief Commissoner, however, ordered that the exiles should be given one hundred rupees each at Jirighat to enable them to live till they could provide for themselves. As regards Golap Singh, Maxwell conducted a separate proceeding, but he proposed to the Chief Commissioner that Golap Singh should also be dismissed from his appointment as member of the Town Panchayet and debarred from employment during the British administration of the State. He even suggested that it would be safer to banish him from the State for lifetime to which Mr. J.B.Fuller, the Chief Commissioner replied, "I think so. He is evidently guilty of intriguing against the Raja." Mr. Fuller firmly believed that Golap Singh was accessory to the bringing against the Raja of a false charge of a "very serious character" in the hopes of discrediting him with the British Government. An intrigue of this kind constituted in any circumstances a serious danger in a Native State; it was more than ever dangerous when it was conducted by a man who was trusted by the State with so high an office as that of President of the Town Panchayet Court. Were the Raja actually administering the State, he would without doubt have inflicted condign punishment upon Ashem Golap Singh. Mr. J.B. Fuller recorded in a note sheet dated 23rd January 1905: [21]

"During the Raja's minority we are bound to protect his interests, and I think that the least that is due in his interest is to remove Arsem Golap Singh (Sic) from the official post and to banish him from the State. If he is in need of money, it is open to the Political Agent to give him an order for Rs 100 on the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar."

The proceedings of the trial in the Arson Case of 1904 against Ashem Golap Singh were of a little complicated nature but the Political Agent could find the concluding issues all pointing towards the man and he called Ashem Golap Singh as '**THE MASTER MIND**' The following brief statements would convey the meaning of the depth of responsibility, which Golap Singh had undertaken and shared in the crime

STATEMENTS

1 Huidrom Chaoba convict in Manipur Jail

Mr Dunlop sent for me I said I knew a number of bad characters and many of them were in jail but two men capable of incendiarism were out of jail at the time of the fire one Sapam Mitung (Sic) and Thanga Nipa Macha (the latter in jail since)

2 Oinam (alias) Thanga Nipa Macha son of Jozoo Singh of Thanga Village

I am a convict in the Manipur Jail and Mr Dunlop told me to go and see if I could learn anything of the persons who set fire to Mr Mitchell s house On reaching the house of Wangkhei Atomba I asked him if he could put me on the track of the incendiaries and he told me he knew the four men concerned and that they had asked him (Atomba) to assist and had offered him Rs 30 but when he heard that it was the *Chota Sahib* s *bungalow* he had declined to share in the crime Atomba said the men were Haobam Chaoba Chirom Chaoba Sapam Mitung and Loitongba Yaima The *Sipahi* and I then arrested Chirom Chaoba and next Haobam Chaoba The other two men were at the *Rajbari* and we did not arrest them

3 Wangkhei Atomba son of Wangkhei Meiraba of Ningombam Leikai Imphal

I told him (Thanga Nipa Macha) that one day Loitongba Yaima called me from my house and took me to his house where Sapam Mitung was seated The two asked me to assist to burn down the *Chota Sahib* s house and they would give me Rs 30 I declined to take part in the crime as I was afraid to burn down a *Sahib* s house I kept silent and did not tell any one that Loitongba Yaima and Sapam Mitung had proposed to me to join them in burning down the *Chota Sahib* s house I first mentioned it to Nipa Macha when he came to my house with the *Sipahi*

4 Haobam Chaoba son of Haojo Chaoba of Singjamei Leikai Imphal

I accompanied the *Sipahi* to Thanga Nipa Macha s house and there he (Nipa Macha) told me that I had set fire to the *Chota Sahib* s house with the assistance of the Raja s servants and that the *Sahib* and Golap Singh *Selungba* had ordered him (Nipa Macha) to make the necessary enquiries Chirom Chaoba was also a prisoner in the house I said I knew nothing about the matter and Chirom Chaoba and I were kept in custody in Nipa Macha s house that night The next morning the *Sipahi* and Nipa Macha took us (myself and Chirom Chaoba) to Golap Singh *Selungba* s house and there we saw the owner and we were ordered by Golap Singh to confess we had burnt the house with Sapam Mitung and Loitongba Yaima the Raja s servants if we did not do so we would there and then be severely beaten but if we did so then we would be rewarded

"We agreed to confess, and accompanied by the *Sipahi*, Nipa Macha and Golap Singh *Selungba* we went to the *Chota Sahib's* house and confessed *This confession is false, and I know nothing about the fire. It was extracted from me by fear*".

5.Chirom Thabal (Chaoba), son of Chirom Feijao, of Singjamei, Imphal:

"...Nipa Macha wanted me to confess I had burnt down the *Chota Sahib*'s house, late Mr Mitchell's house, with the assistance of Sapam Mitung and Loitongba Yaima, the Raja's servants He threatened to beat me severely, and I was very unwell (I was suffering from venereal disease contracted on a visit to Kohima), and I agreed to say. I accompanied them to burn the *bungalow*. I adhere to my former statement that Loitongba Yaima offered me Rs 30 to burn down the *Chota Sahib*'s house, and that Sapam Mitung, Loitongba Yaima and I started one evening to commit the crime Half way I became frightened and escaped from them A few days before Haobam Chaoba had mentioned to me that he was also engaged to burn down the *bungalow*."

6.Oinam Gopal Singh, son of Khema Singh, Chawkidar of Oinam Ningombam, Huidrom Potsangbam Leikai, Imphal:

"I saw a police *Sipahi* and two prisoners named Chirom Thabal (Chaoba) and Haobam Chaoba at Nipa Macha's house I heard both prisoners confess to burning down the *Chota Sahib's* house when Nipa Macha asked them Nipa Macha did not threaten them in my presence, he may have done so before I arrived "

The goal of the '**RIOT**' or the show of the incendiary device, although more concealed in one case than the other, was the same, *viz.*, a great dislike to the order of the Paramount Power nominating Chura Chand's family to the Chieftainship of the State and removing from the succession all members of the late ruling family, added to the disappointment of many other Rajkumars, who considered they had some sort of right or other to the *Gadi*.

Ashem Golap Singh was a firm adherent of the late ruling family, under whom he had served as a salaried servant in Calcutta as the State Agent for many years. His long residence in that town no doubt sharpened his intelligence, and he knew the world far better than most Manipuris, and they consulted him in important matters. The house of the Assistant Political Agent having been destroyed by incendiarism twice in four months and the authorities naturally being anxious to detect the culprits, Golap Singh came forward to assist and proposed the plan of temporarily releasing a notoriously bad character in jail in order to discover the incendiaries.

The proceedings of Thanga Nipa Macha were disclosed in the evidence, and they merely showed the unwisdom of utilizing his services. Maxwell was against the proposal, as any evidence brought forward by such a bad character would be almost worthless, and it would only be by witnesses of equally bad character that any conviction could take place,

and no tangible evidence as in a theft case, such as production of the stolen property etc., could be expected in a charge of incendiarism. However, the Assistant Political Agent was most anxious to unravel the reason why his house was twice burnt down, and thus Maxwell had consented to the proposal brought forward by Ashem Golap Singh.

Golap Singh in his first statement taken by Maxwell on the 22nd October said he had overheard a prisoner Huidrom Chaoba on the road say *The burning of the Chota Sahib's house is the work of some badmashes. I am in jail and Thanga Nipa Macha is in jail but other badmashes are outside and have done the deed.* On this clue he spoke to Mr Dunlop who accepted the services of Thanga Nipa Macha who was released from prison to carry on the enquiry. Golap Singh continued that he took no further interest in the matter but in his second statement dated 22nd December he admitted that Nipa Macha and a police *Sipahi* had brought two in custody named Chirom Thabal and Haobam Chaoba to his house and told him that they (men in custody) had burnt down the *Chota Sahib's* house and they wanted him to accompany them to Mr Dunlop. He replied he would go when the *Sahib* sent for him.

Now if Golap Singh took no interest in the matter why did these men come to his house? The reason no doubt was that Nipa Macha came to consult the '**MASTER MIND**' in the case as to how the matters should proceed. Maxwell certainly believed the independent witnesses (the two *Chawkidars*, Oinam Gopal Singh and Salam Bapoo) who said that the interview was a prolonged one and took place in Golap Singh's verandah out of hearing of other parties.

The evidence in the case and behaviour of Golap Singh pointed to one of two actions: either he was anxious to secure the reward of Rs 500 offered for the conviction of the incendiaries (he was not a rich man and money would be some consideration to him) or he thought the opportunity ripe to overthrow Raja Chura Chand who was the obstacle to his advancement in the State, by charging him through the means of his servants with burning down the Assistant Political Agent's house. Should the charge be proved the Government would perhaps remove Raja Chura Chand and reinstate a member of the late ruling family, and Golap Singh himself would rise again with the tide. If money was the only consideration it was not very obvious why the Raja's servants would have to be implicated in the case; any other two persons could have done equally well and with less excitement or cause for publicity. The evidence therefore, tended strongly in favour of 'political intrigue', and in Maxwell's opinion, this

was what Golap Singh intended, and the plan was well thought out in consultation with other persons who were in great antipathy to Raja Chura Chand's family. Golap Singh was the President of the Town Panchayet Court but under suspension; and Maxwell thought that he had to be dismissed from his position and debarred from employment during the British administration of the State. In a 'Note' dated 30th December 1904, Maxwell recorded the following for the Chief Commissioner's information:[22]

> '*As soon as the Raja assumes the administration of the State Golap Singh will himself leave the country A Manipuri, except he is a bumptious Rajkumar, has no power for good or evil in Manipur unless he holds some official position and if Golap Singh is removed from his post he will at once* ***SINK INTO OBSCURITY***

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER THREE

Rajkumars and the Female Vox Populi

1 Dr R Brown, Political Agent, Munnipore, *Selections from the Records of the Government of India* Foreign Department No LXXVIII, published by Authority, Calcutta, 1870, p 31

2 H St P Maxwell, *Administration Report of the Political Agency Manipur* for the year 1895-96, No 117, p 8

3 H W G Cole, *Administration Report of the Political Agency Manipur* for the year 1896-97, No 51, p 9

4 H St P Maxwell, *Administration Report of the Manipur Political Agency* for 1891-92, No 7, dated 20th May 1892,p 8

5 Captain J R Nuttall of the 44th Gurkhas was appointed tutor to Raja Chura Chand Singh and he joined to the post on 1st September 1902 Mr J G Dunlop took up his appointment of Assistant Political Agent and Assistant Superintendent of the State on 8th November 1903

6 *Disturbance at Imphal in Manipur*, 1904 See Assam Secretariat (General Department) Foreign A , March 1905, Nos 1-93, p 7

7 See Maxwell's Order dated 30th September 1904 Cited in *Disturbance at Imphal in Manipur*, 1904, op cit , p 7

8 See 'Diary' of Lieutenant-Colonel H St P Maxwell, C S I , Political Agent in Manipur and Superintendent of the State, from 2nd October to 8th October 1904, submitted to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Memo No 389, Manipur dated 9th October 1904

9 Rajkumari Sanatombi Devi was a daughter of the late Maharaja Sur Chandra Singh of Manipur She was first married to Nongmaithem Manikchand Singh of Wangkhei Leikai, Imphal, who was a trader by profession After Maxwell had debauched

Sanatombi her first husband wrote to Maxwell *Your wife Sanatombi was formerly my married wife* His Excellency the Viceroy of India Lord Curzon heard that Maxwell was an adulterer and oppressor and this brought his immediate transfer from Manipur on 16 March 1905 See Lieutenant Colonel H St P Maxwell C S I I A who had been so many years Political Agent and Superintendent Manipur State made over charge to me on the 16 March 1905 J Shakespear Major C I E D S O I A (P A in Manipur and Superintendent of the State) The scandal was published in the *Weekly Chronicle* of 11[t] April 1905 This extra marital relation of the two (Maxwell & Sanatombi) was openly recorded in the royal chronicle of Manipur (*Cheitharol Kumbaba* which also mentioned that Rajkumari Sanatombi was re married to Maxwell on 5 October 1892 See pp 532 &546

10 See Diary of Lieutenant Colonel H St P Maxwell from 2[nd] October to 8[th] October 1904 op cit (5 October Wednesday 1904)

11 The arrested ringleader Rajkumars were

Rajkumar Kala Sana he claimed to be a descendant of Bhagya Chandra Maharaja

Rajkumar Megzing was the son of Maharaja Nar Singh with his elder brother they rebelled against Maharaja Sur Chandra in 1886

Rajkumar Matum was an adherent of Maharaja Sur Chandra and son to Rajkumar Pitambar Singh

Rajkumar Chamu was a descendant of Maharaja Garib Nawaz son to Rajkumar Iseihanba of Sagolband

Louam Sanajaoba was grandson of Maharaja Debendra and son to Rajkumar Sanatomba

Rajkumar Thangkokpa was the son of Maharaja Debendra he became member of the Manipur State Darbar

12 See letter from H St P Maxwell to Mr J B Fuller dated 9 October 1904

13 The newly created post of Sub Deputy Collector in charge of the land revenue administration of the State and of survey and settlement operations in the Manipur valley was held by Babu Raj Kumar Rai Sub Deputy Collector Assam from 2[nd] August 1897

14 Since Mr J G Dunlop Assistant Superintendent of the Manipur State was a little inexperienced in the Manipur affairs the information collected by him were found inaccurate

15 The Rajkumars whom Maxwell accompanied with were

[1] **Kishorjit Singh (Thambou Sana)** *Samu Hanjaba*

[2] **Bheirabjit Singh (Paka Sana)** *Sagol Hanjaba*

[3] **Gopal Sana (Padmalochan)** *Fung ganai Shanglakpa*

16 Letter No 408 dated Manipur the 14[th] October 1904 from H St P Maxwell C S I Political Agent in Manipur to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam

17 See Criminal Proceeding *Manipur State Versus Satpa Mithong Singh and Another* Section 436 *Indian Penal Code* J G Dunlop Assistant Superintendent Manipur State dated the 30 September 1904

18 Telegram (in cypher) dated Shillong, the 2nd November 1904 from the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Political Agent of Manipur

19 The statement of the third witness Roton Singh, dated 9th November 1904 was wholly corroborated with Maxwell's 'Diary' dated 3rd October 1904, which said "At a meeting on Monday (3rd October 1904) a leading Brahmin (Bindu Madhab), a friend of mine and a Rajkumar of some position (Roton Singh) advised the people to allow them to come to see me, and suggested that the house should be built by contract at their expense and so save the trouble of building it themselves or the cost of a punitive police force, but they were soundly jeered at and ordered to leave."

20 See 'Order' dated 10th November 1904, Sig., H St P Maxwell Political Agent in Manipur & Superintendent of the State

21 Letter from the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Political Agent of Manipur, No 13 Contdl 482 P dated Shillong, the 30th January 1905 (J B Fuller recorded the 'Note' on 23rd January 1905)

22 Letter from H St P Maxwell, Political Agent of Manipur & Superintendent of the State to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, No 563 dated 7th January 1905

CHAPTER FOUR

(I)

Raja Chura Chand Singh on Her Majesty's Sacred Service

His Highness the Raja was much impressed with the vastness of the country under British rule and the facilities for travel enjoyed by the inhabitants (1904)

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A Manipuri having selected a site for his compound at once commences to dig a large hole to get the earth to construct the plinth of his houses Into this hole when completed he drains the whole of his enclosure and beholds his water supply The household linen plates etc are all washed in this water and when this duty and personal bathing of the day are completed the water for family drinking and cooking is collected (1904)

*

Chura Chand Singh showed his extreme loyalty to the British even before he was formally installed to the *Gadi* of Manipur He well knew that he was independently and by breaking the traditional line of primogeniture appointed by the British Government from an unexpected obscure circumstance He was the youngest of five brothers from two mothers and who belonged to a family whose circumstances and surroundings were of the humblest He was made so loyal to the British by the Paramount Power that he even clearly enjoyed at being treated like a minion The first sign of loyalty shown by His Highness the Raja had occurred in 1903 when Chura Chand was given a royal invitation by His Excellency the Viceroy Lord Curzon, to attend the coronation ceremonies of King Edward VII at the Second Delhi Darbar His presence at the Delhi Darbar was recorded as the GREAT EVENT' of the year (1903) The Darbar was attended with the greatest pomp and pageantry and even more expensive than the Darbar held in 1877 No useful purpose was served by the Darbar except satisfying the craze for pomp and grandeur that was inherent in the character of the Manipuri Raja and the British officials

Raja Chura Chand and his party who attended the coronation ceremony consisted of Captain Nuttall, 44[th] Gurkha Rifles and Tutor to His Highness Mr J W Pritchard, State Engineer, one Native Officer and 29 Rifles State Police as escort, 20 private servants of the Raja, 16 Polo players and 20 Polo ponies Chura Chand took part in the elephant procession at the State entry and he was present at all the State ceremonies

But after going to the expense and trouble of taking up a couple of Manipuri Polo teams and ponies to play an exhibition game, the Delhi Polo Club had treated the Manipur party very badly Mr A F Woods (Major Indian Army) the officiating Political Agent of Manipur who was an eyewitness of the event recorded in his *Annual Report* [1]

> The original date fixed for the Polo was 7th January 1903 but at the last moment the date was changed and we were told to play on the 9th The 9th January was the date fixed for the Polo and the foot ball finals and the Gilgit Polo teams were also giving an exhibition game that day consequently with all these exciting events going on practically at the same time very few people had an opportunity of seeing the Manipuris play Not only were we disappointed but also a great number of people who were very anxious to see the game as played in the home of Polo

Raja Chura Chand had nothing to say either in favour or otherwise in the Arson Case of 1904, which was made with a hurried conclusion of the banishment of a few Manipur Rajkumars and others He was thought a minor and Maxwell thus took the advantage of acting as the arbitrator and sole dispenser of justice in the State The Raja, while still a minor married a Manipuri woman named Ngangbam Ibemcha daughter of one Jugol Singh The marriage ceremony of the Raja took place at the *Rajbari* on the night of the 17th March 1905 Upto the installation ceremony Chura Chand was put under surveillance of his private Tutor Captain Nuttall his eldest brother Rajkumar Dumbra Singh and his grandfather Ramananda Singh (*Monang Ningthou*) He made occasional tours through the hills and valley of Manipur but was always accompanied by his Tutor Captain Nuttall and his half brother Rajkumar Digendra Singh While continuing his studies Chura Chand was also engaged in learning the land revenue work under the tuition of the Sub Deputy Collector Babu Raj Kumar Rai He also learnt from Maxwell many things about the important duties that he would be called upon to perform and to understand upon assuming the Manipur *Gadi*

In one of his letters No 2C dated 19th October 1904 the Chief Commissioner of Assam made reports to the Government of India (Foreign Department) wherein a comparison was drawn in the personalities of Raja Chura Chand and Rajkumar Bhagendra Singh who was one of the sons of Jubaraj Tikendrajit Bhagendra Singh was a youth of much intelligence manifesting indeed the qualities in which Chura Chand was deficient The Chief Commissioner when he visited Manipur was much struck with the influence Bhagendra possessed He was treated by the people in Darbar with infinitely greater respect than they showed to Chura Chand Sir Lancelot Hare (K C S I C I E) the Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam was fully convinced that Chura Chand was rather delicate and

gauche and not over-truthful, but his training in the Imperial Cadet Corps had done him much good, and he seemed to take an interest in the State matters

Chura Chand was the youngest son of a rather obscure Rajkumar family and with few of the personal attributes of a ruler of men he commanded little or no respect in Manipur The Lieutenant-Governor was of opinion that were Chura Chand placed on the Manipur *Gadi* and left to go his own way the result would be disastrous Sir Bamfylde Fuller thought that the best course would be to establish a Darbar, composed of members appointed with the approval of Government Thus on 15th May 1907 the Political Agent of Manipur had announced that under orders from the Government of India the administration of the Manipur State was made over to His Highness the Raja and a Darbar consisting of one member of the Eastern Bengal and Assam Civil Service and of six Manipuri members [3] Next year in February (1908) His Honour Sir Lancelot Hare came to Manipur to install His Highness the Raja formally on the *Gadi* Although the installation ceremony was in itself historically significant for the nation it was considered less important than the event of the Lieutenant Governor's visit to Manipur It was in his honour that many exhibitions of the various national sports and games of Manipur were arranged During his visit about 1 500 hill men representing the various Naga and Kuki clans paraded on the Polo ground before His Honour and gave an exhibition of other various dances All the hill men were fed during the two days they remained at Imphal, and towards the cost of their entertainment Government had made a mere contribution of Rs 460 [4] Expenses connected with the installation of the Raja were extremely heavy the expenditure being actually amounted to Rs 37 753 Previous to this installation the Government of the State was already made over to the Raja and the Manipur State Darbar Chura Chand was barely 23 years old in March 1908 when he married his second wife Chingakham Shyamasakhi Devi, and hurriedly in the same year, the Raja became a husband of three wives', the last named Ngangbam Priyosakhi Devi (June 1908)

Loyalty to the British Crown was shown by the Raja and his people when the news of the death of His Gracious Majesty the King Emperor (Edward VII) was sorrowfully received both by His Highness the Raja and the people of Manipur Chura Chand had in 1903 attended the Second Delhi Darbar in the Coronation Ceremony of King Edward VII and now eight years after when the Emperor died the Raja held

meetings of condolence among the foreign and native subjects of the State. The Coronation in England of Their Gracious Majesties King George V and Queen Mary was celebrated in June 1911. As a mark of respect and loyalty to the British, on 22nd June 1911, a ceremonial parade of the XVIIth Infantry (The Loyal Regiment) together with the Manipur State Military Police took place under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel H.C.Tytler. For three consecutive days from 22nd to 24th June (1911) there were sports, musical performances and other amusements held for all classes of the Manipuri population. The accession of King George V was followed by a Darbar in Delhi held by the King and Queen in person in December 1911. His Majesty made two famous announcements in the Darbar. One was the creation of the Presidency of Bengal under a Governor, while Assam was restored as a Chief-Commissionership. The other was the transfer of the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi. When the King-Emperor and his Queen came to India on the occasion of the Third Delhi Darbar to celebrate their Coronation, the 12th December 1911 (the day of the Imperial Darbar at Delhi) was also celebrated by the whole Indian population with suitable amusements. In Manipur, the Palace of His Highness the Raja, all the public buildings belonging to Government and to the State and almost all the private houses of Imphal were illuminated in the evening. The poor and the schoolboys were fed. The illumination of the State buildings on the Delhi Darbar day actually cost Rs.779 from the public fund. From 24th to 30th March 1912, Raja Chura Chand again gave entertainments in honour of the visit to India of Their Imperial Majesties the King-Emperor and the Queen-Empress. An expenditure of Rs. 45,903 was spent from the Raja's Civil List on account of His Highness's visit to Delhi on the occasion of the Darbar.

On 19th October 1911, Raja Chura Chand left Imphal for Brindaban, and thence he proceeded to Delhi on 1st December to be present at the Imperial Darbar. He was accompanied by his first Rani Ngangbam Ibemcha Devi, his eldest brother Rajkumar Dumbra Singh (Senapati), his nephew Rajkumar Bhaskar Singh, Sougaijam Ibungo Chaoba Singh (Education & Jail Member of the Darbar), Nongmaithem Tomchouba Singh (Additional Member of the Darbar) and a large suite. Mr. J.C.Higgins, Vice President of the Manipur State Darbar was with the Raja in Delhi from 1st to 18th December 1911. Raja Chura Chand was granted a private interview by His Majesty the King-Emperor. Her Majesty the Queen-Empress also received Rani Ibemcha in a private audience. *His Highness the Raja and Her Highness the Rani were extremely gratified at the courtesy and condescension of Their Majesties.*

Raja Chura Chand came back to Imphal in the first week of January 1912, and as soon as His Highness reached the capital he showed his catholic heart to the nation by marrying two Manipuri women at the same time, who were named - Chongtham Chetnamanjuri Devi and Haobam Lilabati Devi thus becoming a proud Raja of five wives' The royal marriage was the exact converse to that which prevailed in the civilised European nations As the Raja was not allowed by the national custom to marry any Rajkumari in Manipur, he was far free from being prohibited from marrying a commoner[5] How deeply he was concerned with the interest of the British and his willful devotion readily consecrated for the well being of the English people could be well illustrated from many instances The 20[t] June 1913 was the birthday of His Excellency the Viceroy Charles Hardinge, Baron of Penshurst On this day, Raja Chura Chand held the Children s Celebration to commemorate His Excellency s providential escape in the Delhi bomb outrage of the previous December (1912)[6] The day was observed with great merriment and each community made arrangements of feasts for its own children, and in the afternoon a general entertainment was given to all the children on the Polo ground all in the favour of the Viceroy

Manipur was considered a good place for the game birds and its floral richness Many Europeans had come to enjoy and seek the mysteries in the profundity of her vast environment among the hills and unbridled paths The Chief Commissioner of Assam was no exception to having the British spirit of adventure and new excitement in a foreign field In November 1913 the Honourable Sir Archdale Earle Chief Commissioner of Assam visited the Manipur State and spent five days in Imphal He inspected some local institutions and enjoyed exhibitions of national sports and dances Raja Chura Chand made arrangements for the Chief Commissioner to have a shooting spree on the Ikop and Kharung *Pat*, but unfortunately rain had interfered with the sport However, a bag of 407 birds was made and the best day s total being 193 birds[7]

An important factor by which the people were made very anxious and feel discontented was the frequent long absence of the Raja from the State during his holy trips at many places in India Many things related with the social grievances of the people could not be settled amicably in the absence of the Raja and hence the Political Agent with his subordinate staffs had to deal direct with the local people, and this could not bring contented solutions Chura Chand himself never carried the burden of transmitting written petitions of the public to the higher British officials for favourable discussions, his journeys were meant for religious

observances on behalf of his forefathers, relatives and near ones who were numerous The journeys were too heavily expensive as the Raja was always accompanied with and flanked by a full retinue of bodyguards and attendants A cursory look would be found sufficient to unravel how frequently the Raja had to leave station much to the aggrieved people who wanted the Raja s fair and judicious decision in many matters

Already before his formal installation to the Manipur *Gadi* in February 1908 Raja Chura Chand had to draw a considerable amount of money from the Raja s Civil List Financial involvements in matters like the death of a member of the Raja s family a pilgrimage to Brindaban undertaken by the near relatives of deceased and again his mother and step-mother (Moirangthem Lalit Manjuri and Thangjam Chitrabati) his two brothers and a number of followers who all made pilgrimage to Brindaban were made with easy adjustments in the Raja s Civil List although it was considered an unusual expenditure Chura Chand s first personal visit and pilgrimage to Brindaban (Mathura) after his installation occurred in 1908, when he also paid a State visit to His Highness the Raja of Hill Tippera at Agartala On account of want of funds in the budget to pay expenses of the pilgrimage to Brindaban, sanction of the Local Government had to obtain for withdrawal of Rs 15,000 from the Reserve The *Sradh* ceremonies of the Raja s far relations and followers were also conducted from his account Not a year had gone before the Raja got prepared for another pilgrimage (1909) to Puri Rameswaram Dwarka Brindaban Hardwar and many other places In the visit, he proceeded to Agartala to be present at the installation ceremony of the young Raja of Hill Tippera

Raja Chura Chand was always an indefatigable campaigner of religious rights and long journeys of pilgrimages never made him tired On 19th October 1911 he left Imphal for Brindaban where he performed religious ceremonies and proceeded to Delhi on the 1st December to be present at the Imperial Darbar Again His Highness returned to Brindaban after the Darbar and reached Imphal on 8th January 1912 thus making himself absent more than two and half months time from the State The journey might be called "A Pilgrimage cum-Darbar Journey' which consisted of a large suite, i e his Maharani Ngangbam Ibemcha Rajkumar Dumbra Singh (Senapati) Rajkumar Bhaskar, Sougaijam Ibungo Chaoba Singh, Nongmaithem Tomchouba Singh and many others The journey cost the party Rs 45, 903 which were sanctioned from the Reserve

Raja Chura Chand was again ready for another pilgrimage to Brindaban in November 1913 to be absent for two months He visited Nabadwip and Silchar *en route* and halted for several days at Silchar to

play the Polo games It was known to all that towards the beginning of the year (1913) the public peace in Manipur was considerably disturbed by a widespread agitation extending throughout the Manipuri population against the much hated system known as POTHANG The Raja therefore, had delayed his return journey to the State to avoid facing the agitators and thus arrived late in January 1914

(II)

The Lieutenant Governor considers that the interest of the State will be better served by spending the money on public works and administrative reforms
J E Webster Officiating Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam (July 1906)

**

The administrative system of the country and the State accounts were in the utmost confusion Lieutenant Colonel J Shakespear (1907)

Before the British resumed charge of the State there was confusion and anarchy prevailing everywhere under the late Manipur Darbar The many abuses prevalent in the administration of the State rather facilitated the high officials in making troubles over the illiterate mass (for Manipuris were almost entirely illiterate and nearly the whole ministerial staff for the conduct of Government under the British rule had to be imported from outside the State) It was against these abuses which were practiced by the officials of the State and the Raja in general that the aggrieved people broke out in open protest and later demanded for equal treatments and non recognition of discrimination among the people

The peculiar working system of a few important departments of the Manipur administration would clearly reveal the various causes, which brought unhappiness to the people The Land Revenue Office, which was the most important one, was solely concerned with the whole valley of Manipur and it was put in the hands of a single Sub-Deputy Collector, under the general supervision of the Superintendent, Manipur State As stated earlier the valley was divided into five *Panahs*, each under a *Lakpa* with a staff of minor officials The lands newly brought under cultivation were surveyed and assessed every year, the rate of assessment being Rs 5 a *pari* which was uniform throughout the valley

The *Lakpas* were accustomed to tour leisurely through the villages under their charge with a large retinue, all of whom had to be fed, housed and transported at the expense of the people The loss of this annual outing was much resented by all concerned But by 1905-1906 the *Lakpas* were

not allowed to leave their stations and thus received the land revenue at the Land Revenue Office The Sub-Deputy Collector, with the help of his *Amins* and the *Lakpa*'s clerks, hunted up defaulters and tardy debtors and drove them in to pay their dues Panchayet members and village officials were also urged to pay their revenue early in time From 1 'April 1906 the *Lakpas* were paid fixed salaries instead of being allowed commission on collections and the pay of their office and field establishments and their office expenses were paid by the State Excluding the Ordinary Members of the Darbar the *Lakpas* were the best paid servants of the State

In matters of the land revenue collection the only coercive measures employed to realise the arrears of revenue was the sale of the defaulting estates It was however, known that most of the defaulters belonged to the middle class of the Manipuri population who resided in Imphal and sublet their holdings to cultivators Their practice was to avoid payment as long as possible without actually losing their holdings The *Kanungos* and *Amins* were also employed in the collection of land revenue For the first time they had assisted the collection department in 1911-1912 The collection of revenue in the mofussil gave the collecting officers viz *Lakpas Kanungos* and *Amins* more opportunities of embezzlement and misappropriation of the revenue amount To obviate this, the system was at last changed The *Lakpas* and their subordinates had to remain at headquarters while the *Kanungos* and *Amins* whose ordinary work usually took them out into the villages were employed in hunting up defaulters and sending them into Imphal to pay their revenue These alterations had a salutary effect as they could provide a closer supervision to be kept over the work of the collecting staff As the Department was wholly concerned with money matters many irregularities were detected oft and on *Lakpas* were dismissed or resigned on account of misappropriation of the State money They were brought to trial before the Darbar convicted and punished Any vacancies thus caused were either filled by one senior clerk of the collection department or an outsider who apart from his knowledge and skill, must belong to "a respectable family

As a result of the abolition of *Pothang* [more information on it will be found in the following] the staff of *Amins* and *Kanungos* was increased and made resident in their circles They were employed in the duties of settlement of wastelands, assessment of concealed cultivation and exclusion of relinquished land They were also employed in hunting up defaulters and sending them to Imphal to pay their revenue In 1913 an extra tax of 3 annas per rupee of revenue was levied on all cultivated land in the main valley of Manipur, increasing the rate of assessment

from Rs 5 to Rs 5-15 per *pari* The proceeds of this extra tax were credited under separate head, from which all the expenditure on account of the abolition of *Pothang* was met Although the cultivators made many complaints against the new rate, it was thought that they would have no difficulty in paying the extra tax, because the value of land and the price of crops, especially rice, had materially increased since the time when this rate was first fixed By giving a weightage on the above view, Mr J C Higgins, Vice President of the Manipur State Darbar had thus commented [7]"The abolition of forced labour of every kind will give the *raiyats* the time, if not the inclination, to earn sufficient to pay the slight increase in his land revenue "

Under the administration of the old Manipur Darbar there was no organized police force and it was only instituted after the British resumed charge of the State A system of rural police was formed by appointing one *Chawkidar* to about every 100 houses These men received Rs 2 a month and half a *pari* of land free and also 12 *pots* of *dhan* from the villages The force was composed of 222 *Chawkidars* and they worked exclusively in the valley Not a single person of the force could read or write any language The village police force (*Chawkidars*) was one of the innovations, which seemed to be of doubtful value The idea was sound enough, but the peculiarity of the Manipuri character had tended to convert the *Chawkidar* from a humble servant of the village into a proud autocrat, whose belt of office had very quickly to be let out to its last hole The method of these leeches was, when some trifling amount of supplies was required for some passing official, to collect 2 pice or more per house, and as according to ancient custom a large number of villages were associated together for the supply of rations etc , the collection left a handsome balance in the hands of the *licensed robbers* It was surprising to note why the ancient Manipuri officials, of whom each village had a large number, would not have done all that the *Chawkidars* were called on to do [8]

One Member of the Manipur State Darbar known as the Police Member was in charge of the Civil Police force For the first time the Police Member suggested that if the *Chawkidars* were rewarded in cases where they did good work, they would be more eager to assist in the detection of crime Cases of serious burglaries were committed in Imphal, notably in the *bungalow* of the Manager, Manipur Company Ltd , during 1908-1909 The culprit was of course, arrested with some of the stolen property, and, being an old offender, he was sent to Sylhet Jail for a long term of imprisonment The *Chawkidars* made the arrest when the convict

tried to escape with the stolen property worth Rs.600 and for this they were rewarded liberally. The *Chawkidars* did little in the way of "watch and ward". It was considered noteworthy whether their duties could not be performed as efficiently under the old system of village officials. However, the *Chawkidars* were reported to be useful in turning out the villagers to do the annual cold-weather repairs on the valley roads, and that they were a great convenience in collecting supplies for officers on tour.

Economic condition in Manipur in the first decade of the century was not unsound, and there was no lack of labour as there was little public works department. Prices of food grains were very cheap and the price of rice was always low in spite of the large export trade. The average daily wage of a labourer was only two annas (to four annas); but by the close of the decade labour was not always easy to procure. By 1911, the price of day labour in the valley was 4 annas and 6 annas in the hills. The price of rice was higher than in the previous decade and much above the normal. But as the population of Manipur was essentially agricultural and the State produced much more rice than it could consume, the high price, so far from causing suffering, was a source of prosperity. Moreover, as it was customary in Manipur for the subtenants to pay their rent in *dhan*, the educated class, most of whom possessed some land, were not seriously affected by the rise in price No doubt, the rise had certainly caused some difficulty to the educated classes who were unable next year to realize their full rent of *dhan* from their tenants, and were thus consequently compelled to purchase for their own consumption. The agriculturists had also suffered, as, on account of the cattle epidemic, they were unable to bring all their lands under cultivation.

The high price did not denote any actual scarcity of rice in the valley, because there was always considerable stock of paddy stored in the granaries of those who could afford to hold it on the chance of a still higher rise in price. The rise in the price might probably be attributed to the high price in neighbouring districts and the decrease in the amount available for export, owing to a smaller crop. The rise in the price was advantageous to the bulk of the population, which was mainly agricultural, and they could easily produce more than sufficient for its own consumption. But the classes that neither owned nor tilled land naturally felt the enhanced cost of the staple food. The following statement would show the fluctuating prices of the staple food grains in Manipur upto the outbreak of the widespread agitation of 1913.

Year	Paddy	Rice	Maund of 80 lbs.
1904	13 Annas	Re 1 8 Annas	Do
1905	9 Annas 6 Pie	Re 1 5 Annas	Do
1906	15 Annas	Re 1 8 Annas	Do_
1907	Re 1 10 Annas	Rs 3 4 Annas	Do
1908	14 Annas	Re 12 Annas	Do
190[illegible]	14 Annas	Re 10 Annas	Do
1910	11 Annas	Re 1 10 Anna	Do
[illegible]11	12 Annas	Re 1 12 Annas	Do
1[illegible]	Re 1 [illegible] Annas	Rs [illegible]	Do
[illegible]	Re 1 5 Annas	Rs 2 2 Annas	Do
1[illegible]	Re 1 2 Annas	Rs 2 5 Annas	Do

As reported earlier by J L Webster (Officiating Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam) in July 1906 that the interests of the State will be better served by spending the money on public works and administrative reforms it was obvious to all that the demand for money for useful public purposes was very large but no new sources of revenue seemed to be available In public works money was badly wanted The people used to keep up the roads free of cost to the State, except as regards permanent bridges but every year the number of bridges and culverts maintained by the State had increased As the temporary bamboo bridges were a constant source of danger they had to be gradually replaced by better structures The rates of pay of all the State servants were very low as they were fixed when rice was only Re 1 (one) a maund But when the cart road admitted of rice being exported with comparative ease the price had no doubt to make a rise The higher price was certainly to the advantage of the producers who formed the bulk of the community yet it had caused the State servants much hardship And thus an increase of their pay was felt unavoidable

(III)

Pothang A Piece of Class Legislation

It was always the custom for all State servants to be supplied with free carriage and food and also attendance by the people of the villages through which they pass J Shakespear (December 1910)

In the early parts of 1913 the public peace was seriously disturbed by a widespread agitation extending throughout the Manipuri population, against the unwanted system known as *Pothang* This was prevalent in the State long before the installation of Chura Chand as the Raja of Manipur, but the system was found to be executed in the severest manner during his reign Under the *Pothang* system roads and schools were kept up by the

village labour and touring officials had their things carried from village to village Practically every village in the valley, except the Imphal villages which were exempted from *Pothang* by the Darbar combined in passive resistance to the system Roads remained unrepaired touring was at a standstill in one case violence was employed to State officials Mr J C Higgins, Vice President of the Manipur State Darbar gave an eyewitness account of the agitation in his *Annual Report* [9]

> The consequence (of the agitation) was that the administration of the State especially in the Land Revenue Department came almost to a standstill The Political Agent attempted to conciliate the people and remove the deadlock by promising to consider the people's grievances and frame a scheme for the abolition of *Pothang* issuing orders that in the meanwhile the *Pothang* system must continue The people however remained insubordinate probably fearing that any sign of weakening on their part might result in the matter being shelved

Detailed proposals for the total abolition of the *Pothang* system and the substitution of travelling allowances and grants for road and school repairs were framed by the Political Agent with the assistance of a Select Committee of the Darbar and were submitted to the Chief Commissioner of Assam who accorded his approval to them in the early part of 1913 The system of *Pothang* was found very irksome to the people and already in 1911 it was suggested that a house tax of Re 1 (one) would be levied from all liable to *Pothang* which *would* produce an annual revenue of Some Rs 40 000 It was considered that the amount would be sufficient for the upkeep of the roads and schools and the provision of a sufficient travelling allowance to the various State servants previously entitled to *Pothang* The only obstacle which was a serious one was the provision of transport It was obvious that if *Pothang* were abolished it would be difficult to obtain the labourers The Department that would suffer most from the disorganization of transport would be the Land and Revenue Department which provided the bulk of the State revenue

As early as 1902 the Manipuri public had showed their strong dislike of the *Pothang* system and they had actually made numerous complaints to the Political Agent who also liked to see it abolished but who feared that it was a "necessary evil" In order to make it as little irksome as possible to the people, Major A E Woods (officiating Political Agent & Superintendent of the State) had issued an order on 4th December 1902, stating that the following State officials would be entitled to use *Pothang* 'when travelling on duty' according to the scale laid down

Kanungos	Revenue Office 2 loads of 30 seers each
Amins	Revenue Office, 3 loads of 30 seers each

Road Subedar ***Lam Subedar*** ***Lambus***	One load each of 30 seers

When the *Kanungos* and the *Amins* proceeded to the *Lawai* areas, the nearest village in which they had work to do had to supply the coolies from Imphal to the village This saved a number of villages from being un necessarily harassed along the roads

Raja Chura Chand who was barely 23 years old when he took charge of the State as President of the newly formed Darbar showed a keen interest in the general administration of the State, and he efficiently controlled the Department of Public Works, of which he was in direct charge Mr Cosgrave I C S Vice President of the Darbar held charge of all matters of Revenue and Finance and was directly responsible for the administration of the hill tribes Lieutenant-Colonel J Shakespear the Political Agent of Manipur had in consultation with the Raja and his eldest brother Rajkumar Dumbra Singh Senapati and Mr Cosgrave regarding the persons to be appointed to the new State Darbar collectively selected the following persons to be Members of the Darbar [10]

ORDINARY MEMBERS

1. **Rajkumar Dumbra Singh** Eldest brother to His Highness and guardian to the Raja and family
2. **Ningthoujam Gokul Singh** Raja s nominee and a Cherap Court member About 55 age old
3. **Sougaijam Ibungo Chaoba** Member of the Cherap Court educated in the Johnstone School he could speak Hindustani Bengali and a little English The Raja was not much in favour of this man reason he had not behaved as politely as he should there were rumours that he had taken bribes Rumours were prevalent against most men who were in a position to be offered bribes

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS

1. **Bindu Madhab Shashtri** A Brahmin who was considered useful in settling disputes
2. **Ningombam Yaiskul Lakpa** Raja s nominee and an elderly man
3. **Maibia Tamra Singh** He was thoroughly loyal to the British Government His Highness the Raja and Dumbra Singh agreed at once to Shakespear s suggestion of placing this man on the Darbar

The new members of the Darbar showed personal interests in safeguarding the age old tradition of the *Pothang* system, while its consequent abuses as practised by the State officials were of grave

concern to the poor public In the first year of its establishment, the Darbar members made a hurried consideration on the question of enjoying travelling allowance (or *Pothang*) and free fooding (*Aremba Chakthak*) previously allowed to the members of the Darbar while on official tour They generally favoured *Pothang* provided that it was given under the old system of *Lalup*, however, Mr Cosgrave pointed out that Government would never approve of the re-institution of *Lalup* when revenue was already assessed on land [9]

In a meeting of the Darbar held on 7 August 1907 it was resolved that members of the Darbar would get *Pothang* for 12 loads and as regards free fooding they would get straw grass and fuel free of cost but that they were to pay for the cost of other things both for their own use and their personal servants Although there was a difficulty about touring in the *Lawai* areas as the Manipuris living in Imphal could not be employed for *Pothang* Raja Chura Chand had announced that the Darbar members when leaving Imphal could hire bullock carts till they reached the nearest *Lawai* village As to the question of granting travelling allowance to the Ordinary Members of the Darbar the Vice President pointed out that they would, under the *Civil Service Regulations* be entitled to Re 1/8 per day as halting allowance but that if such allowances were drawn *Pothang* could not be enjoyed in addition Although the three Ordinary Members of the Darbar were in favour of getting travelling allowance it was finally resolved by a majority of the Darbar that they would continue to get *Pothang* of 12 loads and that the Nagas living in Imphal to be supplied by the Vice President on due notice being given to his office should carry the loads from Imphal to the nearest *Lawai* village [11]

15th June 1910 was an important date on two counts first, Mr C H Bell Esq held the appointment of Vice President of the Darbar from 1st April to 15th June 1910 and Mr J C Higgins took over the charge from him on 16th June On the last day of his office Mr Bell issued a Darbar resolution with full consent of the Raja which showed the Raja s extremely unjust outlook of class legislation among his people It was much detested and severely criticised both by the State officials and the commoners The resolution said that all men living in Imphal proper, all the Rajkumars Brahmins His Highness s and Govindji s honorary servants and all the military police sepoys were exempted from *Pothang* road and embankments and school repairs and other village duties [1] Mr J W Pritchard Esq , the State Engineer very strongly opposed the resolution and he reminded Raja Chura Chand for a very serious consideration that no one should be exempted from roadwork Major A E Woods and H St P

Maxwell had, in their time, strongly objected to any one, not even the private servants of the British officers being exempted. Maxwell did not allow the State Military Police to be exempted, and Shakespear exempted only the Brahmins. Shakespear did not agree with the Darbar resolution of 15th June 1910 as it would throw a great deal of extra work on the poor people while exempting entirely a large class of persons who if they did not choose to work themselves were quite able to pay for substitutes. There was no possible reason at all why a Rajkumar had not to contribute his fair share like every one else. Shakespear strongly argued that the resolution adopted with the Raja's consent would certainly cause immense trouble and discontent among the people.

J. Shakespear frequently spoke to the Raja regarding the abolition of *Pothang* and compulsory roadwork and the Raja also expressed himself in favour of the change. Shakespear suggested that instead of the troublesome duties the people would gladly pay a house-tax of Re. 1 (one) a year which would bring in about Rs 40,000. The sum could be utilized for the roads to be properly kept up and of the travelling allowances to be given to State servants. Thus all *Pothang* and similar services might be done away with. The suggestions were referred to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam for urgent implementation but matters were found delayed much to the great annoyance of the public.

In the last part of December 1910 it was reported that the *Pothang* and the *Coolie* system for the roads were found to become extremely unpopular and obviously a far higher tax would gladly be paid to be rid them. It was not so much the actual labour that was so irksome as 'extortion and oppression' that the system led to. Every visit of a State official of any sort to a village made active the village authorities to levy contributions far in excess of the actual requirements and to retain the surplus. As the State officials and the village authorities were the cause of great discontent the system became very undesirable among the village people. The Darbar now agreed to the abolition of the system and was engaged on discussing the details. While giving information to the Government, Shakespear briefly explained the plan in his report.[13]

> Travelling allowances will be given to State servants out of the house tax and the roads will be repaired by contract the cost being met from the same source. The village school houses will also be constructed and kept in repair from this fund instead of as hitherto by the inhabitants of the villages in which they are placed.

The Government accepted the proposal and showed no objection to the imposition of the extra house-tax, provided that care was taken to see that the proceeds of the tax were utilized in the repair of roads and

embankments and the other purposes for which it was intended and that the money was not diverted to other objects. Mr. Shakespear put pressure on the Government for immediate implementation of orders, and in February 1911, he reported that the abolition of the forced labour on roads and transport and of the obligation to supply State officials with food free "was urgently demanded by the people". The Lieutenant Governor did not object to the experimental withdrawal of the obligation to supply food, carriage and labour free of charge, but he insisted on the State retaining the right to require the villagers to supply all three on payment at reasonable rates. The Darbar carefully discussed the question, but it was found necessary to postpone the matter for some time pending the receipt of concrete information from the State Engineer as to the probable cost of the upkeep of roads and schools.

The abolition of *Pothang* and its related matters was delayed on two grounds, first, Mr H Benson, the State Engineer, had very much doubted that the money which was possibly raised in lieu of the labour given free would be sufficient to keep the roads in proper repair. Second, the Darbar had failed to suggest a feasible plan for the conveyance of baggage of State officials especially *Amins* and *Peons* etc., if Pothang were abolished. It was, therefore, that the Political Agent of Manipur had left the matter alone.[4]

The villagers strongly protested against the system of *Pothang*, carriage, and free fooding for the *Amins* and *Peons* (*Amin Chakthak*), free lodging of the officials, and attendance by the villagers at night to guard the collected revenue (*Yairek Sentry*) etc. Petitions were rejected many times on the ground that the inhabitants had 'defied legitimate authority' and they were given punishment with heavy fines. Everyone in the State Office seemed to possess authority to inflict punishments – the Raja, Political Agent and the Government, the Darbar and members of the Cherap Court – all had power to issue orders. Villages were collectively fined and given punishment when the people refused to supply the *Pothang* duty. The poor people were the lot to be 'extorted and oppressed', and the fine was even raised upto Rs 450. The serious nature of the thing could be seen in October 1911 when the Cherap Court had ordered the Thoubal villagers to do the *Pothang* punitive labour under the State Engineer. As the villagers did not budge and comply with the order, Mr J C Higgins, Vice President of the Darbar, issued the following on 25th October (1911).

"The Khekmal village is fined Rs 50 and will supply 73 men tomorrow at the State Engineer's Office. They will pay an additional fine of Rs 10 per day for every day which they fail to obey this order."

In another incident Mr J C Higgins had to face with some angry villagers of Moirang who refused to do *Pothang* He and Mr F B Blackie[15] were on tour in the south of the valley during the early part of March 1913 and there they experienced some trouble with the people at Moirang On 2nd March (1913) the *Moirang Khadrakpa* made a complaint to Mr Blackie that the villagers of Ngangkha Lawai a small village west of Moirang had refused to do *Pothang*, *Seba* or any village work Subsequently the *Moirangthem Mantri* brought a man of the village whom the Panchayet had caught and after consultation Mr Higgins suggested that the man should carry out his *Pothang* duty next day Mr Higgins wrote to the Political Agent on 10th March 1913 (No 855)

> While I was hearing cases in the verandah of the Moirang Rest House some 10 (ten) men of Ngangkha Lawai appeared and said they had filed a petition and until it was disposed of they would refuse to do *Pothang* I replied that they must do the *Pothang* until excused They refused to leave the place so I got up and pushed them without violence down the steps whereupon a man rushed up and tried to assault me Before he could hit me I knocked him down The rest set upon our *Chaprasis Lambus* and Saises Mr Blackie and I ran out to the rescue and were again assaulted Mr Blackie was hit on the arm and Purna Chandra in the eye We finally beat off our assailants arrested the two ringleaders and inflicted chastisement

It was obvious that the above incident was part of an ORGANISED AGITATION directed mainly against the abusive system of *Pothang* which seemed to have affected the whole population from Imphal to Moirang, and round Thoubal and Mayang Imphal

(IV)

*Proposals for the Abolition of Pothang and the **Corvee***

It was known to all that the abuses connected with the *Pothang* system had far outweighed any of its possible advantages but as the Manipuri Darbar Members found it too difficult in suggesting a feasible scheme for working any alternative system, the matter had to be delayed In April 1913 a scheme for the abolition of the *Pothang* system was however drawn up by Mr Shakespear in consultation with the Judicial Member Education Member and the Vice President of the Darbar and the scheme was approved of by the Raja

The members proposed a fixed travelling allowance in all cases where the recipients were constantly on the move because these men would be able to make permanent arrangements for their conveyance and also the fixed allowance would save much trouble and expense in preparing and checking bills No doubt the fixed allowance was considered more popular

As regards labours for repairs of the roads, all the members agreed that there would be no difficulty in getting contractors to do the work [Rajkumar Dumbra Singh Senapati, who was the Judicial Member of the Darbar stated he would be ready to take contract for the whole of the work if necessary ']. As regards supply, the villages had to produce it when called on by persons entitled to get them. A special person like the village *Chaukidar* would be appointed to see to this. A rate was to be promulgated at which each article was to be supplied. On the movements of His Highness the Raja about the valley, Mr. J. C. Higgins proposed that the cost of the movements should be met from the Civil List. The expenditure on account of the journeys had to be paid by the State Office on bills countersigned by a responsible officer of His Highness's staff '

There was no doubt of the genuine desire of the people to be freed from the ever increasing liabilities of the *Pothang* system yet there was no method of stopping the many abuses which had grown out of the system *short of abolishing the whole system'*. The following draft-proposal of Mr. Shakespear on the abolition of *Pothang* was submitted to the Chief Commissioner of Assam on 7th April 1913 for approval and sanction.

ESTIMATED RECEIPTS

The amount needed and the question of how to raise it was discussed. The first proposal was put on the house tax but this was rejected for the following reasons.

There are only some 40,000 houses in the valley and out of this number 5,000 would have to be struck off for valley Nagas and the poor people who are unable to pay. Therefore unless high rates per house were fixed a sufficient sum could not be raised from this source. The following objections also exist to a house tax. It hits rich and poor alike. It would require a count of houses every year which would be expensive and lead to abuses. Two or more families who live in separate houses sharing a common house could easily evade it. This is a probable contingency as many married sons live in the same house as their parents.

It is based on a wrong interpretation of *Pothang* which is a service performed on account of land held within the village boundary. The up keep of roads also is obviously the duty of all the landholders within each village boundary not that of the particular residents. When the *Lalup* was abolished a house tax of Rs 2 per house was substituted but as soon as arrangements could be made for measuring the land covered by the homesteads land tax was substituted for house tax owing to the trouble connected with collecting the latter. For these reasons the house tax was rejected.

Other sources of revenue were considered and those enumerated were selected.

Court and other fees. These are very low and the Manipuri is very fond of appearing in Court and the proposed increase will hurt no one. The system of *Advalorem* fees in Civil Cases does not exist. It is possible that a higher income may hereafter be

obtained from Court fees but it was thought better to begin cautiously and not to make the system too elaborate. The fees suggested in connection with partition and surveys are moderate and cannot cause any complaint.

The School fees. It was felt that those who benefit should pay something towards the cost of the school buildings. The people of Imphal are wealthier than those in the *Lawai*; they have for many years only been called on to repair the fences whereas the *Lawai* people have had to maintain the complete schoolhouse. The Imphal schools are much better attended especially in the higher classes, which are the more expensive ones to the State. It does not appear that there is any fear of a serious falling off in the number of students, as the introduction fees in the Johnstone and the Upper Primary Schools has not reduced the number in any way.

Thatching Grass. At present there are two forest reserves in which the thatching grass is sold. It is proposed to demarcate a few more areas and thus increase this revenue.

The above sources of revenue are only estimated to produce Rs 7,000. The only source remaining is the Land Revenue. At present this is uniform all over the valley at Rs 5 a *pari* which is equivalent to 2 acres. This cannot be said to be a high rate when we consider the cheapness of ***dhan***.

The greater part of the expenditure which has to be met is on account of *Pothang* and road repairs and it seems quite proper that the main portion of the cost should fall on the land. The point was raised that the people of Imphal should only pay half rates as they don't live in the *Lawai* and are not doing *Pothang*. The Darbar a short time ago only exempted the Imphal people from *Pothang* and this cannot be put forward as an argument *why they should not contribute equally with the rest of the community*. If they choose to hold land in the *Lawai* obviously they ought to bear the whole burden of that land, whereas hitherto they have only paid the land revenue and escaped the *Pothang* and road repairs pertaining to those lands.

The Darbar on 15th June 1910 passed a resolution[18] exempting Rajkumars, Brahmins, His Highness's and Govindji's honorary servants and all Military Police Sepoys from *Pothang* and road work. I vetoed this resolution as it would have thrown so much extra work on other classes. In Colonel Maxwell's Note when he made over charge to me he emphasized strongly the necessity of excusing no one except the Raja's family and the Magistrates from these duties. There is no doubt that the opposition to the present system owes much of its strength to the evasion of their duties by various persons. I am therefore strongly averse to any difference being made between the people of the *Lawai* and those of Imphal. The Imphal man leases land from the State and then sub-lets it or works it through hired servants. At present the custom is for the tenant to pay 12 *pots* (equal to about 16 *maund*) of paddy per *pari*. This rate is almost universal and it is alleged that if the landholder has to pay 1 extra per *pari* he will have only a small margin of profit. The rate paid by the tenant can be raised on good land and the land which will not yield a profit to both the cultivator and to the absentee landlord is better to abandon to the former.

ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE

Land Revenue Department

1. Field Staff. At present the field staff is resident in Imphal and tours when necessary. This necessitates a great deal of travelling and if the system is persisted on the travelling allowance of these officials would be excessive. It is therefore proposed to locate

the *Amins* permanently at suitable places in the valley and to increase their number by 8 (eight) men so that each *Amin* may be able to carry out his duties without sleeping away from his head quarters and it will not be necessary to provide travelling allowance for them

At present there are 3 *Kanungos* but they will not be sufficient under the new system and one has been added These men will have to be constantly on the move and so a fixed travelling allowance of Rs 15 a month has been allowed so that they may keep a baggage pony or make other permanent arrangement for their transport

Collection Staff There are 5 *Panahs* but one is the town of Imphal and its neighbourhood The collecting staff in the Imphal *Panah* will not have as much travelling to do and therefore they have only been allowed fixed travelling allowance at half the rates of the other 4 *Panahs* The *Lakpas* only go out when sent by the Vice President so a lump sum has been provided for their travelling allowances The clerks and *Muhorirs* are out constantly so fixed travelling allowances have been allowed for them

Office Staff The Bench Clerk accompanies the officer in charge of the Land Revenue Office on tour and it has been considered better to provide him with fixed travelling allowance The amount provided for *Peons* and *Chaprasis* has been based on the Sub Deputy Collector's estimate of the amount of touring required The rate 3 a day has been fixed after consideration of the advantages which have hitherto been enjoyed and which they will have to give up The same remark applies to the extra allowance proposed for process service Peons

Repair and Upkeep of Camps Hitherto the people have been obliged to keep up a considerable number of camps for the use of the Land Revenue officials These are repaired every cold weather by the people without any remuneration These camps will in future be kept up by contract and will be at the service of all State officials while on tour

State Works Department

The Road *Subedars* are in charge of road repairs Six of them who have to travel beyond Imphal are given Rs 10 fixed traveling allowance

Education Department

The Schools in Imphal are mostly tiled buildings and are kept in repair by the State works but the compound wall are repaired by the people In the *Lawai* the schools are thatched buildings and are constantly repaired by the people These repairs are a source of constant trouble The Inspecting *Pandits* receive travelling allowance at *Civil Service Regulation* state but as they will in future get no assistance free a fixed travelling allowance has been provided in lieu of a daily rate

Judicial Department

Dolaipabas are Peons The Judicial Member's staffs are not sent out regularly and he thinks Re 1/ per month will compensate them sufficiently The *Dolaipabas* of the Cherap and Sadar Panchayet are constantly out At present their pay is only Rs 2 a month and a grant of land They are not supposed to take *Pothang* but they have undoubtedly done so The allowance proposed is however estimated only to compensate them for the cost of food which they have hitherto received from villagers

Darbar

The number of days assigned to each member is merely an estimate of the time each is likely to be on tour. Considering their position in the State Rs 7 8 is not an excessive rate for them to draw.

In April 1913 the agitation against the *Pothang* system became more intense and every village in the valley had combined in passive resistance. The State administration seemed paralyzed and attempts at conciliation were in vain. The repairs of roads and schools, the transport of the officials' baggage, free fooding, *Seba* and *Sentri* were all halted and everything looked depressed and bleak. Raja Chura Chand could not make his tour in the valley on account of the *Pothang* disturbances; a heavy fall was seen in the percentage of the land revenue collection due partly to the agitation against the *Pothang* taxes, and there came a sudden decrease in the number of cases of the Revenue Court work. A huge number of silk worms owned by the Manipur Company (reverted to Manipur in October 1912) were deliberately thrown away in response to the urging of the *Pothang* agitators whose disturbances became widespread and the whole public peace was seriously affected. Members of the Darbar thought that prompt and vigorous action was necessary to restore order and break down the passive resistance to orders. They therefore suggested that a fine had to be imposed upon every house of the villages which refused to do *Pothang* or the customary village duties, or in the event of the fine not being paid or of a second offence in the same village the ring leaders would be arrested, publicly whipped in Imphal and committed in prison. The Manipur State Darbar therefore requested the Chief Commissioner for an immediate despatch of a sufficient force of Military Police from Kohima to look after the agitators in case the people continued insubordinate.[1]

Sir Archdale Earle, the Chief Commissioner of Assam agreed with the Political Agent in thinking that the *Pothang* system should be abolished but the State must retain the right to require the villagers to supply food, carriage and labour on payment of reasonable rates. The Chief Commissioner also accepted the proposals for new taxation in their entirety; he, however, desired that the new system should be regarded as an experiment and the sums realized from the taxes should only be devoted to the specific purposes mentioned. The proposal that school fees should be levied was also considered favourably. The Chief Commissioner well understood that certain villages in Manipur displayed recalcitrance in carrying out the orders of the Darbar in relation to the rendering of *Pothang*. Though he approved of the abolition of *Pothang*, he openly instructed

the Darbar to inflict punishment on the persons responsible for the disobedience of their orders While intimating his approval and sanction to the proposals of the abolition Sir Archdale Earle wrote to the Political Agent [2]

Though it is admitted that a reasonable cause of complaint existed in regard to the working of the *Pothang* system and that the people were within their rights in bringing to notice the inconveniences which they suffered as a result of that system it was the clear duty of the subjects of the State while the system remained loyally to carry out the orders of the Darbar in relation thereto and the Administration cannot but view with displeasure their failures to do so

The Local Government had approved of the proposals for the abolition of *Pothang* during the last week of April 1913 and to this effect Raja Chura Chand made a proclamation on 9[th] June (1913), ordering the introduction of the new system and the imposition of new taxes necessary to defray the extra cost The new taxes consisted of

1 An increase in the Land Revenue at the rate of 3 annas per rupee

2 The sale of thatching grass *mahals* and minor fisheries formerly free

3 The imposition of survey partition and process fees and an increase of Court Fees

4 A nominal school fee in the primary schools

Just a few days before the announcement (but after receiving the Local Government s Orders) the Manipur State Darbar hurriedly passed an extremely unpalatable resolution against a section of the society It said that the *Chawkidars* and the *Nambors* of every *Mahalla*, who were chosen by the villagers should be responsible for the supply on payment of food carriage lodging labour *Scbu* and *Sentri* for the State officials while on tour and that the *Nambors* should enjoy the *phou khai* previously enjoyed by the *Chawkidars* [1] The Darbar gave their reasons for reducing the *Chawkidars* remuneration by making over a portion to the *Nambors* as follows

1 The *Chawkidars* did not do much work for the pay they got

2 The *Nambors* did as much as the *Chawkidars* with the new responsibility and they received no remuneration

The *phou khai* was originally given to the *Chawkidars* for watching at night a duty which they had never carried out

The resolution was much resented by the village *Chawkidars* of all the five *Panahs* for the deduction meant a miserable life devoid of their monthly pay of Rs 2 and 12 *pots* of dhan as their *tolop phou* Petitions were submitted but to no effect, and the poor villagers at last solicited the

help of one Haodeijam Chatanya Singh to plead for their cause and for a fairer treatment of the down trodden in general On behalf of the poor mass Chatanya drafted the following and submitted it to His Highness the Raja

We beg to state that when Your Highness come on tour to *Lawai* we serve Your Highness and when the State Officers on tour we serve them and also at the time of collecting revenues we watch village at night We have no leisure moment from State works

Under these circumstances we pray Your Highness to prevent the Darbar not to deduct our *tolop phou* of 12 *pots* of dhan We pray to increase our pay which we cannot meet with our support our self and our family [Sic]

(V)

A Transfer from Customary Duties to Ancient Obligations and Services of the People to the Raja on Regular Cash Footing

In November 1913 Sir Archdale Earle K C I E Chief Commissioner of Assam Mr W J Reid I C S Chief Secretary and Captain H R Wilson I A his Personal Assistant came to Manipur while the *Pothang* agitation still continued The agitation was then directed against the new taxes and especially against the increase in the Land Revenue Rumours were put about by disaffected persons that the Chief Commissioner was coming to the State to remit the taxes and to cancel the fines imposed by the Darbar for disobedience of its orders Many petitions were submitted to him during his stay at Manipur In accordance with the Chief Commissioner s orders J Shakespear issued a notice inviting any people who had already submitted petitions to the Chief Commissioner or who had grievances to bring forward, to assemble at his office on 23rd November 1913

On that day (23rd November) Mr Reid the Chief Secretary went down with the Political Agent and met the petitioners who were assembled there He began by explaining to them that the Chief Commissioner had sent him to communicate his orders He then enquired whether any of those assembled had any grounds of complaint other than those set forth in the petitions One or two of the people assembled made short speeches but no one brought forward anything new He explained that the petitioners seemed to have forgotten that they were the subjects of His Highness the Raja, and that their country was governed by His Highness and the Darbar Mr Reid explained that the Chief Commissioner had no intention of passing orders in His Highness's State and he said that 'undoubted grievances had existed in connection with

the *Pothang* system" but that this was abolished by His Highness the Raja and the Darbar, and that the Chief Commissioner who was informed of the new orders passed fully approved of these Two men interrupted at this stage, and protested against the increased rate of land revenue When questioned they admitted that they had personally complained to the Political Agent against the *Pothang* system and said that they and the people generally would cheerfully pay additional land revenue provided only they were freed from the hardships attending to the *Pothang* system

Mr Reid advised the people assembled to let bygones be bygones and obey the orders of His Highness the Raja and the Darbar and not to go on appealing to the Chief Commissioner about matters which had already been settled He said that if the people did not follow the advice a worse thing might befall them He also stated that it would be well if the people immediately paid up the fines which were imposed by the Darbar for disobedience to orders, and said if they did not do so the Darbar might increase the fine

Even after the announcement of the Chief Secretary a rumour was spread that the Chief Commissioner had remitted the taxes with the result that the early collections of land revenue were seriously impeded A prompt arrest and incarcerations of the ringleaders soon dissipated the rumour and brought in the revenue

As an after effect of the abolition the staff of *Amins* was increased from 20 to 28 and they were made resident in their circles The number of *Kanungos* was raised from 3 to 4 and they were all employed in their usual duties An extra tax of 3 annas per rupee of revenue was levied on all cultivated land in the main valley of Manipur increasing the rate of assessment from Rs 5 to Rs 5 15 per *pari* There was a decrease in the number of boys in the Lower Primary Schools in the valley This was due to the introduction of a school fee of one anna in schools in Imphal and 6 pies in those in the rest of the valley The small fee was levied to cover as far as possible the costs of repairs to the schools which were previously carried out by the villagers but taken over by the State on the abolition of *Pothang* The removal of the boys was certainly not due to any inability to pay such a small fee but it seemed a feeble protest against the *Pothang* taxes The maintenance of valley roads and river embankments which was formerly kept up by the villagers under the *Pothang* system was for the first time taken over by the State and repairs were done by contract the necessary funds being provided from the POTHANG TAXES The result was a considerable improvement in communications repairs to roads

being properly carried out whereas under the old system they were always patchy and incomplete owing to the invariable difficulty experienced in turning out the villagers

After the abolition of *Pothang* Raja Chura Chand and his Darbar turned their attention to all the other old dues and duties religious or otherwise performed by the people of which some were obsolete and others liable to give rise to many abuses Some were abolished while others were regularized and clearly defined In almost all cases the peoples obligations to their ruler and the State were converted into the payment of small contributions in cash It was obvious that Raja Chura Chand and his Darbar exercised powers with less regard for the customs and age old traditions of the Manipuris and the Raja had certainly endeavoured to interfere with the existing institutions This was a total negation of an Article which was contained in the notification issued by the Governor General in Council under No 1862 E of 18[1] September 1891 in the *Gazette of India* It was found quite surprising to note what made the Raja and his Darbar to re examine the very obsolete and previously discarded ancient obligations and services to revive and to re impose upon the people with new forms of taxes The ancient customs with regard to the dues and duties originally performed by the people were all regularized and converted into a form of compulsory subscription which was bitterly detested by the people The following new impositions provoked a widespread popular discontent with the Manipur Administration

1 **Kangthouri** That instead of collecting *Kangthouri* a subscription of half an Anna per house be collected from all *Meiteis* (except *Phamnaibas* sons and grand sons of certain high *Phamnaibas* husbands and sons of *Leimasigis* *Ningthou Sagei*s *Siyabams* *Duhens* Brahmans Rajkumars and Lois) Nagas and *Muhammadans* not being *Meiteis* are not liable to pay this subscription

2 **Kangchingba** That all Meiteis are liable to attend for *Kangchingba*

3 **Lai Haraoba** That when a *Lai Haraoba* is performed the *Sagei* or *Khul* on behalf of whose *Lai* it takes place should remunerate the *Maiba Shang* the *Maibi Shang* and the *Pena Khongba Shang* The rate should be Rs 6 for each of the above colleges if the ceremony lasts for several days otherwise only Rs 4 If in any year any *Khul* or *Sagei* being unable to perform the full ceremony merely makes presents to its *Lai* it should only pay to each of the abovementioned *Shangs* Rs 2 to Rs 4 according to circumstances

4 **Chabok Wangol** That on the occasion of the birth of child to His Highness the Raja by any Rani a subscription of one *pice* (3 *pies*) per house be collected from all *Meiteis* with the exceptions mentioned in No 1

5 **Mera Haojongba** That those Naga villages which have in previous times been accustomed to appear for *Mera Haojongba* shall continue to do so They shall bring the usual trifling offerings in kind and shall be rewarded by the State

6. **Pakhangbagi Shang Saba** "That when *Pakhangba's* house needs repairing or reconstructing a subscription of one Anna per house should be collected from the *Ningthouja Salai*

7. **Ram Mela and Sibaratri** "That the collection of any fees for *Ram Mela and Sibaratri* be prohibited and the necessary expenses be borne by the State

8. **Phamban Tongba** "That on the occasion of *Phamban Tongba* the *Khutnaibas* and all *Yumnaks* should do the necessary work peculiar to their respective trades the material being provided by the State The ten *Panahs* should also bear their share of the work But no collection should be made in cash

9. **Pacha and Napet** "That a yearly contribution of 4 *Utongs* of dhan should be collected from every house in the Manipur valley outside Imphal The dhan thus collected should be divided between the *Napets* and the *Pachas*

10. **Hiyang** "That when *Hiyang* takes place a subscription of one *pie* be collected from every *Meitei* house in Imphal (excepting those mentioned in No 1) for the construction of *Higashanes* for His Highness the Raja and the Maharani The *Phamnaibas* should build their own pavilions

11. **Cheiraoba** "That every year the *Cheithaba* selected on the last day of *Chaitra* be granted a *pari* of rent free land for his lifetime

12. **Chandan Selkhai** "That *Chandan Selkhai* should not be levied without the order of the Darbar and that the rates should be fixed by the Darbar And that every *Meitei* should contribute

13. **Thangapat Sengba** "That *Thangapat Sengba* be abolished and the necessary expenses borne by the State

14 "That the compulsory provision of mats for the building of *Mandops* on any occasion of urgency be abolished and the necessary expenses borne by the State

15. **Kwakjatra** "That the duties incumbent on the *Keirus*" on the occasion of the *Kwakjatra* be carried out in future at the State expense "

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER FOUR

Raja Chura Chand Singh on Her Majesty's Sacred Service.

1 A I Woods, Major, Indian Army, Officiating Political Agent in Manipur and Superintendent of the State, *Administration Report of the Political Agency Manipur*, for the year 1902-1903, No 83, p 9

2 See "Note Sheet" dated 10th September 1906 by L Hare to Sir Louis Dane printed in *Installation of His Highness Raja Chura Chand of Manipur* 'Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Political A September 1907, Nos 1-26, p 3

3 The proposed Members of the Manipur State Darbar were i] Rajkumar Dumbra Singh Eldest brother of His Highness ii] Ningthoujam Gokul Singh- Cherap Member age 55 nominated by His Highness iii] Sougaijam Ibungo Chaoba Son of Balaram General Member Cherap Court iv] Bindu Madhab Shashtri A Brahmin v] Ningombam *Yaiskul Lakpa* Nominated by His Highness vi] Maibam Tamra Singh A Major in the late Manipur Army

4 A W Davis Esq Political Agent in Manipur *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1907 1908 No 152 M S 1908 p 2

5 The Manipuri custom had enjoined that a Raja should have many wives and many children and this tenet Chura Chand had fulfilled by completing at least the number of wives He had the following children by different Ranis (a) Her Highness Maharani Dhanamanjuri (Ibemcha) gave birth to five daughters namely Tamphasana (February 1909) Sana Tombi (September 1911) Tombi Sana (April 1914) Ibem Tombi (October 1916) and Nungshibi Sana (February 1922) Ibemcha was the eldest child of Ngangbam Jugol Singh (Shijamacha) and Bhanumukhi Devi She was born in the Khamaral village in the northwest of Imphal in 1879 If the year is correct Ibemcha was already 26 years old when she was married to Raja Chura Chand in March 1905 when the latter was barely 20 years of age! Jugol Singh and Bhanumukhi had four more children Sakhi Tombi (second child) also became wife to Raja Chura Chand Shyamkishore (third child and eldest son) became a *Yaiskul Lakpa* and a member of the Cherap Court Iboyaima and Ibotombi were the youngest sons Ibemcha had no sons (b) Rani Chingakham Shyama Sakhi gave birth to three sons namely Bodh Chandra Singh (July 1908) Priyo Brata Singh (February 1911) and Ghanendrajit Singh (December 1923) (c) Rani Priya Sakhi (sister to the first Maharani) had two daughters and one son namely Tejmanjuri (August 1911) Jai Singh (July 1923) and Bhubaneswari (November 1925) [On 22 January 1925 Her Highness the Maharani adopted as her own the son of the 3 Rani The Governor of Assam had witnessed the ceremony The child was named Jai Singh] (d) Rani Chongtham Chetnamanjuri (e) Rani Haobam Lilabati had one son namely Lokendra Singh (May 1913) (f) Rani Maisnam Subadani was married on 2 February 1925 She had one daughter and one son namely Jadabendra Priya (8 January 1929) and Lokendrabir Singh (December 1930)

6 In December 1912 on the occasion of his formal entry (Viceroy of India Charles Hardinge) in the new capital (New Delhi) a bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge who was severely wounded

7 E C Higgins Vice President Manipur State Darbar *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1913 1914 Thacker Spink & Co Calcutta 1914 p 5

8 Major J Shakespear Political Agent in Manipur & Superintendent of the State *Administration Report of the Political Agency Manipur* for the year 1905 1906 No 154 Shillong p 5

9 E C Higgins Vice President Manipur State Darbar *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1912 1913 Thacker Spink & Co Calcutta 1913 p 1

10 See Letter No 12 Confdl Dated Imphal the 21 April 1907 from Lieutenant Colonel J Shakespear C I E D S O Political Agent in Manipur to the Judicial Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam

11 See Manipur state Darbar Resolution No 3 of 13 December 1907

12 See Manipur State Darbar Resolution No 1 of 15 June 1910

13 See Letter No 1628 MS dated Imphal the 27th December 1910 from J Shakespear Political Agent in Manipur to the Secretary to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam in the Political Department

14 D O No 21 MS dated Imphal 10 August 1912 from J Shakespear Political Agent of Manipur to Mr G C Kerwood Under Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam Shillong

15 Mr F B Blackie was appointed Private Secretary to His Highness the Raja on 10th July 1912 He had to undergo a course of Land Revenue training under the Sub Deputy Collector with a view to ultimately taking charge of the Department

16 See Letter No 23 MS dated 7th April 1913 from Lieutenant Colonel J Shakespear C I E D S O I A Political Agent in Manipur to the Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam Shillong

17 In 1894 1895 the Langol Hill near Imphal was surveyed and proclaimed a State Reserve Forest and the tract of hilly country at Heingang a few miles from Imphal was also proclaimed a State Reserve Forest in 1895 1896

18 See Manipur State Darbar Resolution No 1 of 15 June 1910 Considered what persons to be exempted from road repairing *Pothang* etc Resolved (a) When it does not concern His Highness the Raja all men living in Imphal proper are exempted from *Pothang* (b) All Rajkumars Brahmins and His Highness s and Govindjee s honorary servants are exempted *Pothang* road and embankments and school repairs and other village duties (c) All Military Police Sepoys are exempted *Pothang* etc (Sig C H Bell Vice President Manipur State Darbar Manipur)

19 See Resolution No 6 of the Manipur State Darbar Proceedings dated 17 April 1913

20 See Letter No 2004 P Political Department Political Branch Shillong from the Hon ble Major W M Kennedy Officiating Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Political Agent in Manipur dated 28th April 1913

21 Resolution No 7 of the Proceedings of the Manipur State Darbar held on 14 May 1913

22 *Haodeijam Chaitanya Singh* son in law of Rajkumari Ibhabal Sana Devi daughter of Maharaja Debendra Singh He was the man who first put a distinguished British officer into a position of insecurity and great humiliation before the Manipuri public for the cause of redressing a personal grievance of a particular man On the behalf of one Nongmaithem Manikchand Singh of Wangkhei Leikai who was the legal husband of Rajkumari Sanatombi (daughter of Maharaja Sur Chandra Singh) Chaitanya wrote to Lieutenant Colonel H St P Maxwell Political Agent & Superintendent of the State *Your wife Sanatombi was formerly my married wife I spent Rs 200 for the marriage so I pray you to return me the money*

23 Note on Action Taken in Connection with a Series of Petitions Submitted by Certain Manipuris W J Reid Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam dated 24th November 1913

24 T C Higgins Vice President Manipur State Darbar *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1913 1914 Thacker Spink & Co Calcutta, 1914 p 9

25 Manipur State Darbar Resolution No 7 of 31 December 1913 as amended by Resolution No 1 of 28 January 1914

26 *Keirol* They were slaves of the Raja and formerly Nagas They cultivated land chiefly on account of the Raja The particular duty of the *Kei* was to provide and pound the rice for the Raja s household The work of the *Keis* was not confined only to the supply of rice but on the supply of any article the Raja chose and was therefore most oppressive (See Bibliography T C Higgins)

CHAPTER FIVE

(I)

The Progress of a Pilgrim

Raja Chura Chand kept his loyalty to the British Government untarnished by age and social slogans Hospitality and regal treatment offered to the British officers seemed to be his inherent personal attributes On the outbreak of the war in August 1914, Chura Chand placed his personal services and the resources of his State at the disposal of the King-Emperor and he loyally supported the Imperial Government to the utmost of his ability In addition to his personal subscriptions to various war funds, he presented four motor ambulances at a cost of Rs 28, 000 to the Imperial Government Three were sent to Mesopotamia, and one ambulance to Aden He also purchased an aeroplane for Rs 22, 500 for the British Government

Sir Archdale Earle, K.C I E., the Chief Commissioner of Assam with his wife Lady Earle visited Manipur in February 1916 to lay the foundation stone of a residential High School at Langthabal By leaving aside his hectic programmes of pilgrimage, Chura Chand made himself readily available at Potsangbam while the Chief Commissioner halted there for a shoot on the Loktak Lake on his way to Imphal Rs 4, 000 was expended in honour of the Chief Commissioner's visit to Manipur Chura Chand invested Rs 1, 00,000 of the State funds in the Indian War Loan and another Rs 33, 800 in the Government four per cent Terminable Loan of 1915-1916 In recognition of his service in connection with the War, Raja Chura Chand was invested with the title of Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire as a personal distinction, and that of *Maharaja* as a hereditary distinction [1] In March 1918 he went to Shillong to receive from the hands of the Honourable Chief Commissioner, his *Sanad* conferring on him the hereditary title of *Maharaja*

Sir Nicholas Dodd Beatson Bell, K C S I , K C I E , the next Chief Commissioner of Assam came to Manipur on three occasions, principally in connection with the Kuki Rebellion. His first visit was in April 1918, and the second in November of the year His third visit was paid in March 1919 during which he presented His Highness Maharaja Chura Chand with the insignia of his title "Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire" Extreme loyalty to the British was more or less shown

in any event connected with the Imperial Government It was far and more exaggerated in his show of loyalty when the news of the Armistice was received in Imphal with great enthusiasm Celebrations were held (for Armistice) in the course of which offerings were made to various temples in or near Imphal the Brahmins and the poor were fed and a torch light procession of the Imphal schoolboys was organized The Manipur Government held peace celebrations and at Imphal men of the Manipur Double Company and the Military Police were fed public buildings were illuminated sports and races were held and fire works were arranged In the hills feasts were provided at Churachandpur Ukhrul and Mao for the hill men who had been to France with the Manipur Labour Corps Everyone seemed to be in a jubilant mood and Manipur looked like an English country[1]

Chura Chand was actually considered a truant and absentee Raja by the Manipuris due to his repeated habit of avoiding the State s duty for long periods while on pilgrimage Long travels could not give physical exertions since the Raja was always taken care by a large retinue of his followers He left Imphal on the 22nd April 1915 and went to Shillong where the Raja spent a happy time in the new houses recently purchased by the State An Agent was posted in Shillong to look after the annual repairs of the property and its general supervision After spending there for a holiday of over three months in the new houses the Maharaja returned to Imphal on 31 July 1915 In December again he went to Dibrugarh to be medically examined and on his way back he paid a visit to Sadiya where he inspected the detachment of the Manipur State Military Police attached to the Lakhimpur Battalion and hurriedly came back to be present at the shooting spree of the Assam Chief Commissioner Mr J C Higgins Vice President of the Manipur State Darbar had to go to Shillong in advance and to make arrangements for His Highness s arrival there and to be in attendance on him for a portion of his stay there

Next year in May (1916) the Maharaja repeated the same tour programme of making visits to Dibrugarh and Sadiya and to Shillong twice where he stayed for about a month on each occasion On 17th December 1916 after the death of his second daughter (aged 6) the Maharaja again went on a pilgrimage to Brindaban Benaras and Nabadwip From Brindaban he proceeded to Delhi to visit Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy & Governor General of India in January 1917 and there he met several members of the Government of India and settled various questions concerning the administration of the State From Delhi the Maharaja went to Lansdowne for an inspection of the Manipur Double Company and

returned to Imphal on 2nd February 1917 Within a few months he re-visited Brindaban in November of the year (1917) on a pilgrimage and paid a visit to Lansdowne On his way to Brindaban he again paid a visit to Shillong twice the latter in March 1918 to receive from the Chief Commissioner his *Sanad* conferring on him the hereditary title of *Maharaja*

In the midst of a great disturbance of the Kukis in the southern part of the Manipur valley and the agitation of the plains people who demanded a complete abolition of the *Pothang* system the *Minai* tradition reduction of the water tax and in the outbursts of a communal hatred against the Marwari businessmen of the Imphal bazar His Highness Maharaja Chura Chand had to stay at Moirang with his wife Maharani Ibemcha from 12th February to 14th March 1919 for a CHANGE which naturally involved a large retinue of royal suite and new constructions of a make believe town hurriedly erected for the Maharani His Highness made brief tours in the valley for 43 days at Foijing Moirang Karong Thoubal and Sugunu etc before he immediately left Imphal on 18th February 1920 for a pilgrimage to Brindaban whence he did not return till after the close of March of the year Important State matters had remained at a stand still in the absence of the Maharaja and thus the European Officers had to cope with the complaints of the local people who nevertheless preferred the Maharaja s personal attention and care for his subjects

In the early parts of 1916 there had occurred an apprehension of organised opposition from the Manipuris against the Maharaja s scheme of sending men for a Double Company to Lansdowne to be trained for active service The opposition was due to ignorance ultra-conservatism and fear of being impressed and the latter had led many of the younger people to go trading to Burma and the hills The Maharaja however explained the matters to his subjects and held a Darbar in Imphal which was attended by the headmen of all the Manipuri villages in the valley This had allayed the uneasiness of the people and recruits were again made without much difficulty His Excellency the Viceroy (Lord Chelmsford) accepted the offer of Maharaja Chura Chand in raising a Double Company for active service and thus it was ordered that the contingent, when recruited should be sent to Lansdowne and attached for training to the 3/39th Garhwal Rifles The first draft of 182 men had left on 11th December 1916 and the second draft of 57 men on 5th February 1917 The Maharaja who took the keenest interest in raising the Double Company somehow succeeded in overcoming the preliminary difficulties due to religious scruples

against service overseas and all subsequent apathy on the part of his Manipuri officials and opposition on the part of the more ignorant of his subjects The Maharaja released for service with the Company his Private Secretary Mr J B Blackie Esq who had a considerable knowledge of Manipur and the Manipuri language [Mr Blackie was appointed to the Indian Army Reserve of Officers in December 1916 to command the Contingent] In addition to the expenditure on the Contingent of Rs 12 776 Maharaja Chura Chand had also invested another Rs 22 500 for the purchase of an airplane to be presented to the Imperial Government During March and April (1917) there was some disquiet in the hills of Manipur over the raising of the Labour Corps At least four influential Kuki Chiefs had sent round flesh and beads to all the minor chiefs ordering that no one should go to France Their example was followed by the headmen of the Tangkhuls a large tribe in the east of the State Two of the four Kuki Chiefs who were the initiators of the movement took up an attitude defiant of all authority

(II)

The Open Rebellion

The Manipuris look down with contempt on all the savages on their borders and have never made any attempt to civilize them The Honourable Mr J E Webster C I E I C S Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam June 1919

When the administration of the State was made over to the Raja with the assistance of a Darbar and the advice of a Political Agent on 15th May 1907 it was at first thought necessary to exclude all the hill tribes from the control of the Darbar and to place them directly under the Vice President of the Darbar who was always a British officer nominated by the Local Government The rules for the administration of the hill tribes were framed in March 1908 and it continued with certain trifling modifications into force upto April 1916 It was plainly obvious that the rules did not make adequate provision for the administration of the hills on the following grounds

1 It was impossible for a single officer to cover in his annual tours the whole of the 7 000 square miles of mountainous country with practically no roads and in most parts only jungle tracks passable for travellers on foot

2 While in the neighbouring British districts it was customary for the British officers to deal directly with the hill men and to employ when necessary as interpreters and go betweens selected men of the hill tribes the practice in Manipur handed down from the days of Manipur independence was to employ as intermediaries petty Manipuri officers called *Lambus* These men were responsible in no small measure for the rebellion

3 While in any conditions it was impossible for the President of the Darbar to keep in touch with all the villages and tribes in the hills the difficulty was considerably increased by the modification of the *Rules for the General Administration of the State* made in 1916 which added substantially to the responsibilities of the President as regards the Darbar and made it more difficult for him to get away for prolonged tours in the hills

4 The added anxieties connected with the great war the raising of a Double Company of Manipuris for service in the Indian Army and the distress in the Manipur valley resulting from the floods of 1916 made it more difficult than ever for the President to devote as much time as was desirable to the tribes in the hills

At the beginning of 1917, the Government of Assam was asked to furnish a quota of labourers for employment with the Army in France The demand for labourers was communicated to Maharaja Chura Chand through the Political Agent and His Highness immediately offered to raise 2 000 labourers and another 2 000 later on Neither the Political Agent nor the Maharaja had at first anticipated any difficulty in raising the labourers required But soon after the actual recruiting began some of the Kuki Chiefs in the outlying hills adopted an obstructive attitude Orders were issued to the chiefs in question to come in and discuss matters but they did not obey these orders Though a complete labour corps had been raised by May 1917 a large section of the hill tribes did not contribute at all and several of the leading chiefs prevented their tribesmen from enlisting and refused to come in and see the President of the Darbar in compliance with his orders

In August 1917 a conference was held in Shillong to consider how drafts should be raised for the labour corps then in France Mr J C Higgins agreed to do his best and he hoped that it would be possible to raise a fair number of recruits The chiefs however had declined to give coolies and accordingly Mr Higgins with an escort of 50 Rifles under a British officer proceeded to Mombi and when the chiefs did not come in or send any representative the whole Mombi village was burned on 17' October 1917 Notices were sent to the principal chiefs telling that recruits for labour corps would not be demanded but that they must submit to punishment for their organised resistance" to the demands of the State and for their refusal to obey orders Preparations were made to send out a column to arrest the chiefs who failed to appear in compliance with the summons

A Manipuri named Chingakham Sanajaoba Singh who was professed to have supernatural powers and who lived with some disciples at Kumbi near Moirang took a prominent part in instigating the Kukis in the

hills near Moirang to break into open rebellion On 19th December 1917 Kukis from Ukha Hinglep and neighbouring villages headed by Chingakham Sanajaoba Singh and some other 4 or 5 Manipuris had raided the Manipur State forest toll station at Ithai It was obviously intended by the rebel Kukis as an overt act showing that war was declared and there was evidence to show that Sanajaoba intended to lead the Kukis in an attack on Imphal about 22nd December 1917 There was considerable anxiety among the Manipuri and Indian population of Imphal that the Kukis would raid the capital but the political situation was gradually improved by the despatch of columns of the Assam Rifles against the rebel Kukis Many of the Manipuris in the villages round Moirang were in sympathy with the rebel Kukis and they assisted the latter by supplying food in large quantities to them Steps were taken to prevent this by the establishment of outposts at Moirang and other places in the south of the valley The situation called for prompt and energetic action and thus columns of the Assam Rifles were organized and marched against the rebellious tribes

In April 1918 the Kuki rebels raided several villages in the valley and more than 200 State subjects including Manipuris Manipuri Mohammedans and various tribes who were all well disposed towards the British Government and the Maharaja of Manipur were killed in the raids Almost at once the Kukis began raiding friendly villages and killed large numbers of men and women with the utmost brutality

Plans were prepared for operations on a large scale for the complete subjugation and disarmament of the rebels The plan finally adopted was that of placing throughout the hills a network of blockhouses stronger forces under British officers to move through the country overcoming opposition and to disarm all the hostile villages and to endeavour to capture the leading rebels By March 1919 all the leading Kuki chiefs gave themselves up and the lesser chiefs quickly followed them The operations resulted in the complete suppression of the rebellion and the surrender of about 1 000 guns of which approximately two thirds came from the Manipur State The troops which were engaged in the operations consisted almost entirely of the Assam Rifles and the Burma Military Police The Manipur State Military Police had also co operated in the operations Political control was completely resumed by the civil authorities on 21 April 1919 and the military operations under Lieutenant General Sir Henry Keary were brought to an official close on the 20th May

His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur showed great interest in the suppression of the Kuki rebellion He toured round the valley

inspected the outposts of the Manipur State Police, made many arrests of the Manipuri supporters of the rebels and he personally brought into Imphal in his motor car wounded victims of the Kuki raids While forces were thus actively engaged in the suppression of the rebel Kukis Maharaja Chura Chand further showed loyalty to the British by sending two drafts of recruits to Lansdowne for the Manipur Double Company 101 men in all had to leave Imphal for training at Lansdowne as supply of new recruits was thought necessary to fill up casualties and to replace the men returned as unfit For this purpose a reserve of recruits was maintained in Manipur but after the Double Company had been formed great difficulty was experienced in getting further recruits from both the Manipuris and the Nagas

In spite of the heavy investments of over a lakh of rupees in the repairing of the State buildings bridges and roads after the disastrous floods of October 1916 and the heavy expenditures incurred in the suppression of the Kuki rebels Maharaja Chura Chand devoted the whole of the proceeds of the new taxes for the year 1916 1917 to objects in connection with the great war In addition the Maharaja had also invested in the Indian War Loan a sum of Rs 1 00 000 of which Rs 80 000 was collected from the ordinary revenue and the remaining Rs 20,000 from the water works balance It was during these unprecedented political and economic instabilities all brought by the disastrous floods, consequences of the Kuki rebellion and the unwilling acceptance of the recruits for the Labour Corps, that Maharaja Chura Chand had to make a hurried tour to make enquiries in the process of iron smelting at Leisowpokpi near Kakching, and to spend a brief conjugal bliss with his Maharani at Moirang for 30 days[1]

It was now recognised that the system by which the President of the Darbar had to administer unaided from Imphal 7,000 square miles of hilly territory was quite unsatisfactory Decentralization was urgently necessary and it was hoped that it would be possible to establish three British Sub-Divisional officers in the hills The decentralization scheme was brought into operation in 1919 and three new Sub-Divisions were formed each of which to be administered by a European Sub-Divisional Officer The following three Extra-Assistant Commissioners were lent by the Assam Government for the new sub-divisions

1. **Mr B C Gasper Esq** The southwest area with headquarters at Churachandpur (for the Kuki tribes)
2. **Mr W Shaw Esq** I A C The northwest area with temporary headquarters at Tamenglong (for the Kukis, Kabui Nagas and Kaccha Nagas)

3 **Mr L L Peters Esq** The northeast area with headquarters at Ukhrul (for the Tangkhul Nagas and the Kukis)

A large area in the north of the State including the Mao and the Maram Naga groups the whole of the Mombi area in the south-east, and the various tribes of hill-men bordering the valley were continued to be administered direct from Imphal under the President of the Darbar, who formerly had the impossible task of administering some 7,000 square miles of hills in addition to his duties in the plains of the Manipur valley

(III)

I experienced great difficulty by the most disastrous flood that has occurred in Manipur within the memory of man J C Higgins I C S President Manipur State Darbar 1917

Rice was the staple food-grain for both the Manipuris and the hill-men and therefore, a timely rainfall and good harvest seemed very significant A fear of the famine was reckoned every now and then when a poor harvest and heavy exports of rice took place A little rise in the price of the staple food was not always an 'unwelcome event to the poor *rayats* as it meant a higher exchange of the produce in terms of cash But in 1915 the price of rice had risen to an abnormal height In spite of the embargo on the export of rice, the price at Imphal had risen to Rs 4 per maund in May 1915 and Rs 5 in August The high price was considered an extraordinary thing in Manipur, for the average price during the preceding few years had been just under Rs 2 per maund The country poor had subsisted for some time on water nuts, which was found in large quantities in the Loktak Lake Though there was no actual famine, severe distress prevailed until the early rice began to come in Relief works were opened and rice was distributed to the really indigent through the Government agencies Flood and rice scarcity had frequently brought a great anxiety and distress to the minds of the people who however were given some gratuitous relief, especially to the poor people As in the normal condition there was no rise in the price of rice due to the embargo placed on its export The harvest of the year 1915-1916 was a good one and large quantities of rice were exported, but when the crop of the next year was partially destroyed by the floods an immediate prevention of the rice export was desired to check a serious rise in the price and to save the State from having to face a shortage of food grains If no undue rise in prices had occurred, the embargo was removed any time

In the early parts of October 1916, a disastrous flood occurred in Manipur An eyewitness account of the calamity was given in detail by

Mr J C Higgins, I C S, President of the Manipur State Darbar in his *Annual Report* as under [3]

> There was a continuous downpour of rain in the valley for about a week which in conjunction with torrential rains in the hills caused all the rivers to swell far above the ordinary flood level Numerous breaches occurred in the river embankments and in many places where the embankments held the rivers overflowed their banks The first place to give was the right bank of the Imphal river about a mile and a half above the station The water rushed into Imphal with tremendous force and the State Engineer s *bungalow* and office the Civil Hospital the bazar and part of the Cantonment were quickly submerged Considerable damage was caused to merchandize in the bazar especially food grain and salt and there was also much damage to property in the Manipuri quarters of Imphal Two days after the breaching of the Imphal river *bandh* had flooded the western portion of the town including the British Reserve the swollen Iril river three miles to the east of Imphal bursts its banks and all the country between the two rivers was quickly inundated including His Highness the Raja s Palace The main Palace building the temple Darbar Hall and stables which are built of brick escaped but many other buildings including the houses of the Ranis and the quarters of many of His Highness s servants were destroyed *Practically the whole of Imphal was submerged*

Until the floods subsided the people of the Imphal town had to live for several days in temporary shelters erected upon the roads, embankments and any high grounds available The distress of the people was somehow alleviated as far as possible, by the distribution of rice to the flood affected people The cost of repairing to the State buildings bridges and roads was estimated at over a lakh of rupees and the total amount expended by the State only on the relief of distress due to the floods was Rs 11, 295 In the previous year also (1915 1916) there had occurred a flood causing temporary distress in several parts of the State and Rs 6 596 had to be expended on the relief of distress Again the falls of June and August in 1918 were very excessive and it caused floods which did damages in the low lying areas with totally destroying the rice crop The embargo placed on the rice export in July 1918 was removed in October and large quantities of rice were exported with the result that there occurred a sudden high rise in the price of rice The prices of all other foodstuffs and of clothing were very high in 1918 The price of mustard oil rose to 14 annas per seer and chilies which were consumed by all classes in the Manipur valley as well as in the hills became almost an article of luxury There had occurred two floods in June and August 1918 which caused great damage to the crops of the Manipur valley The frequent floods in the valley and its cause was due to the silting up of the river beds, and that there was only one outlet for the water of the valley in the hills near Sugunu The gradual silting up of the Loktak and other large lakes, which used to carry off enormous quantities of water when the rivers

were full was also another contributory cause The price of rice was far above normal throughout the greater part of the year 1919 and its export was closed from June to November The material condition of the agricultural population in the valley and labourers in general was considered improved by the higher prices they had obtained for the produce of their lands and the labour they supplied to the Kuki Punitive Measures (K P M) *It was only the middle classes who were the real sufferers and their number in Manipur was small*[4]

The annual fluctuation in the price of rice was caused by the degree of rainfall amount of the produce and its export without a proper survey of the market business and the condition of the poor *rayats* The following table would indicate the ever increasing price of rice which was caused mainly by heavy exports throughout the seasons

Year	Paddy	Price		Rice	Price		Per Maund
1915	Do	Re 1	6 Annas	Do	Rs 2	10 Annas	Do
1916	Do	Re 1	3 Annas	Do	Rs 2		Do
1917	Do	Re 1		Do	Re 1	13 Annas	Do
1918	Do		12 Annas	Do	Re 1	8 Annas	Do
1919	Do	Re 1	4 Annas	Do	Rs 2	4 Annas	Do
1920	Do	Re 1	10 Annas	Do	Rs 2	5 Annas	Do
1921	Do	Rs 3	4 Annas	Do	Rs 3	14 Annas	Do
1922	Do	Re 1	5 Annas	Do	Rs 2		Do
1923	Do		14 Annas	Do	Re 1	13 Annas	Do
1924	Do	Re 1		Do	Re 1	10 Annas	Do
1925	Do	Re 1	5 Annas	Do	Rs 2	10 Annas	Do
1926	Do	Rs 2	8 Annas	Do	Rs 3	11 Annas	Do
1927	Do	Re 1	7 Annas	Do	Rs 2	6 Annas	Do
1928	Do	Re 1	7 Annas	Do	Rs 2	5 Annas	Do
1929	Do	Re 1	2 Annas	Do	Rs 2	2 Annas	Do
1930	Do	Re 1	2 Annas	Do	Re 1	11 Annas	Do

(IV)

Who's Afraid of the Marwari Wolf?

Class exploitation of the valley Manipuris by the Marwari traders had already begun from the early decades of the century but none of the Manipuris took great concern over the matter As the years rolled by and the number of population ever increasing, the valley people of Manipur steadily realised their feelings of discontent against the Marwari traders

who had now come out in the open to hoard every available food grains at very low cost from the ignorant villagers Rice was the staple food grain of every Manipuri, but the production and scarcity of rice depended entirely on the timely rainfall or shortage of it Flood, insects, amount of the hoarding by the Marwari merchants and the exports of rice by the State officials for use by the British subjects at Kohima, Sadiya and other places in Assam were more or less responsible for the rise of price and the scarcity of rice in Manipur People could not make any complaint to His Highness the Maharaja who himself took an extreme interest in the export business of the Marwari traders, when the ominous signs of scarcity became imminent

Rice was the chief export of Manipur, and in the beginning of the second decade there was a large surplus of rice available for export The price of rice was above normal throughout the greater part of the year 1919, and the export was closed from June to November The year 1921 was remarkable for the high price of rice, and the extraordinary increase in the number of dacoities committed was undoubtedly due to the high prices prevailing then and the great scarcity of rice The crimes went to the extent that they were committed by whole villages who helped themselves to the rice stored in the richer men's godowns The high price of rice had resulted with intolerable hardships to the poorer sections of the community On account of the poor harvest, which was obtained in the previous year, there naturally came a great distress in the valley during the period of the rains The signs of the scarcity of rice and its effects on the poor community of Manipur actually occurred around April 1921 The first indication of the scarcity was the great increase in the number of persons who came to seek relief in the poor house attached to the Civil Hospital The number of such persons was at first minute, but by the last week of the month it had risen to 153 Strict enquiries were made as to the *bona fides* of each applicant for relief, yet the number gradually rose until finally over eleven hundred persons were supplied relief at the end of July 1921 His Highness the Maharaja could not remain by disengaging himself from the pressing needs of the people, and he thus collected subscriptions to relieve "only those" who, on account of their social status could not attend and receive the help Actually the Maharaja did not contribute anything for the relief, but the other private charity did much to alleviate the distress of the people, particularly the Marwari merchants of the Imphal bazar They made a hurried subscription of over Rs 5, 000 and distributed free rice to an enormous crowd of people

on the Polo ground The Maharaja summoned an immediate public Darbar and he raised a large subscription amounting to over Rs 4, 000 and 200 *pots* of paddy and with the proceeds of this fund rice was distributed to the crowds which on some days must have amounted to over five thousand persons '

Things appeared to be so serious that the Manipur State Darbar finally decided to open relief works as it became apparent that many undeserving persons had managed to be included in the gratuitous relief Relief works were accordingly opened at Kanglatongbi in the middle of August (1921) and it was proved to be eminently successful as *a real test of distress* Two poor asylums for the sick and feeble (one for the Hindus and another for the Mohammedans) were also opened at Imphal the capital city The number of persons on relief rapidly rose until in the middle of September there were about 250 persons at the Kanglatongbi poor asylum and over 100 people in the two poor asylums Mr C S Mullan M A (Indian Civil Service) President of the Manipur State Darbar made a remark on the occasion

> It is noteworthy that very few Manipuri Hindus appeared at the poor asylums This was probably due to the fact that in many cases the richer men in the villages were constrained by the force of public opinion or by fear of being looted to support the poorer inhabitants by loans of paddy Several cases of forced loans from those who had large stocks of paddy were reported but there was no widespread agitation

With a view to reducing the price of rice available at the Imphal bazar thousand maunds of rice were imported from Gauhati and Silchar and sold at less than the bazar rates in a shop specially constructed for this purpose in the main bazar of the Imphal town The total amount spent by the State in the famine relief of distress on account of the scarcity during the period was amounted to Rs 16 268

Under the name of the Government contractors a number of Marwari merchants exported huge amount of rice to out-stations like Kohima Sadiya and Dacca Battalions of the Assam Rifles The Marwaris were not worried about the production of the annual grains and they were the least concerned either in the scarcity or a plentiful availability of rice in the Manipur valley Their aims were only to attain the complete quota of the sanction already permitted by the Maharaja who issued the export passes on the request of the Political Agent The following Marwari merchants who had alleged that they were the Government Contractors were allowed to supply the amount of rice noted against their names since the passes issued were declared valid upto the last week of September 1920

Name of Contractors	*Station Supplied*	*Quantity per month Maunds*
Sudasukh	Kohima Battalion	1,000
Sooresh Chunder	Sadiya Battalion	1,000
Sanairam	Dacca Battalion	500
Badri Narayan	Dacca Battalion	300
Kaluram	Piphima PWD Coolies	80
Kaluram	Kohima Hospital	50
Murlidhar	His own shop	30
Ganesh Lal	Sadiya PWD Coolies	980[One time only]
Ganesh Lal	Sadiya PWD Coolies	360[For two months]
Jibanram Premsukh	Piphima Shop	200[July only]
Sudasukh	Kohima Civil	800
Kaluram	Piphima PWD Coolies	900
Kaluram [For small Contract]	D C Kohima	3,000[One time]
Deven Narayan Tiwari	Piphima PWD Coolies	450

The export trade in rice was much loathed by the local Manipuris especially at a time when the harvest gave little promise to the poor cultivators The first Marwari merchant who showed a 'detrimental aptitude' towards the plains Manipuris for causing to him inconvenience in the business of rice-export was one Sooresh Chunder Mookherjee, a Government Contractor whose Head Office was at Tiretta Bazar, Calcutta For a long time he had been doing the contract work by purchasing rice at Changangei and Malom on the Cachar road. But in September 1920, villagers and *Chawkidars* of the two places did not allow Sooresh Chunder and his men to sit there and purchase rice. The villagers had also warned the womenfolk who dealt in rice not to sell it to any Marwari merchant. If they happened to see any women who came to sell rice, the crowd forcibly took the baskets and scattered it on the ground. On some occasions when the Marwaris purchased 4 or 5 maunds of rice they were not given passage and the bullock-carts were forcibly blocked on the road.

From July 1920 onwards the Marwari merchants could not procure sufficient rice to meet the Government requirements, and as their stocks were about to be exhausted they became apprehensive lest their supply should fail to fulfill the demand quota of the Government. Thus the Marwaris first requested the Political Agent to help and assist the Government Contractors in procuring the required amount of rice from the village areas of the State. The Political Agent accordingly asked the President of the Darbar to enable Marwari Sooresh Chunder for the purchase of 60 maunds of rice every day which amounted to 1,800 a month to fulfill the Government contract. He also strongly advised the President that there should not be any objection on the way of the persons who were

desirous of selling rice to the Marwari merchants [6] The Political Agent considered it to be a foolish action on the part of the Manipuri cultivators who had promoted agitation against the Marwari merchants and who presumably thought that the Marwaris were the cause of the high price of rice at the time He also ascribed "foolishness" on the promoters of the agitation when they sent men with *lathis* in the bazar of the British Reserve area at night and tried to enforce a boycott of the Marwaris

Apart from the illegal methods to which the agitators had resorted which could lead to serious trouble the people by their action not only interfered with the supply of rice to the Assam Rifles at Kohima Sadiya and Dacca but they certainly gave cause of a great monetary loss to the Manipuri cultivators whom they prevented from selling their surplus rice to the Marwari merchants at a good price Besides this by preventing people who brought rice to the market they actually prevented the price of rice from falling The Political Agent somehow consoled the Maharaja with his suggestion that there was not the slightest chance of the supply of rice in the valley running short and were there any such danger he promised that he would not hesitate to stop export even by the Government Contractors He therefore instructed the Commandant of the Assam Rifles to arrest the people who patrolled the bazar in the British Reserve at night with *lathis* in order to enforce a boycott against the Marwari merchants

One Baliram Das (Sub Inspector of Police) and his Officer and 10 sepoys of the Assam Rifles found an anonymous letter written in Manipuri from the shop of Shermal Sudasukh The letter stated that discussions would be held at the Polo ground on the problems arising out of the high price and the scarcity of rice in Manipur The following points were highlighted for discussion

1 The high price of rice due to incessant purchase of it by the Marwari shopkeepers

2 To expel the Marwari shopkeepers from the *Lawai* villages

3 Dearness of rice for the year and great apprehension for the subsequent years to come

4 The extortion of money by force from the illiterate villagers

5 Reduction of price for the clothes and other imported articles

The proposed meeting was immaterial to the State authorities but the agenda in the programme were of great importance as there was possibility of its leading to a class struggle and communal conflict in the Manipur valley The Political Agent had repeatedly reminded the Maharaja

to prevent occurrence of any interference by the agitators with business in the British Reserve. The Maharaja was also asked to have due notice of the conduct of these people who without any authority greatly interfered with the liberty of both the British subjects and the Manipuris in and outside the British Reserve area. The agitation, which was caused by a great discontent from the high price of rice, had certainly received good advice from the Bengali shopkeepers in Manipur. They started by interfering with the purchase and carting of rice in the mofussil, and at first the agitation was only confined against the Government Contractors. The agitators' idea was to boycott the Marwaris and to carry on the trade of the country by the Manipuri agencies only. It was of course, extremely doubtful whether the Manipuris would be quite capable of carrying out the Government contracts and other business as was done by the Marwari merchants. Mr. Clarke was of the opinion that their interference in the British Reserve would not be tolerated, nor would authorised persons be allowed to interfere with the Government Contractors in the mofussil. He realized that the real grievance of the people was the high price of rice, which had occurred as a result of the export trade

Manipur was a small State with scanty resources and the inhabitants also were very poor. The chief means of their livelihood was agriculture, home-industry of an undeveloped type and the carrying on of a business transaction with the available products of agriculture and her industry. Formerly, these products were within the easy reach of the average public who had some tendency towards business transaction, and thus they met the public demand at reasonable prices. But with the ominous entrance of the Marwaris in the business atmosphere of Manipur things were completely changed. They began to exploit in all the available products of the State at the expense of the poor inhabitants who had no capital and resources enough to compete with the Marwaris in their new struggle. Thus they were left in a critical position - either to choose their own destruction or to cherish the thralldom of the Marwari capitalists who devoured up every moment the entrails of the State.

The main grievance of the poor inhabitants seemed to be the objectionable feature of the Marwaris' enterprise in their high profiteering campaign. They sucked up every product of the State, *viz.*, rice, dal, chilies, cotton and dried fish etc. and stored up in their godowns by previous arrangements through their menial agents at nominal prices. But when the country became dry of its products, the Marwaris began to dispose them at an exorbitant price of twice or thrice of the original. Formerly the Marwaris were allowed to export rice from Manipur with condition to

stop it when the price of rice rose upto Rs 3 per maund But certain Marwaris were granted permit to export rice for the Government purpose even during the time of prohibition Most of the Marwaris in Manipur, without at least considering the needs of the public always tried to avoid the restriction under cover of the **Red Pass.** Even during the agitation many of the Marwari merchants exported the same quantity of rice as before the prohibition which far exceeded the Government demand

It was a matter of great shame that many of the Manipuri women of the adjacent villages had to supply rice to the Marwaris at night and these women-folk were also an important factor in bringing about the famine It was considered detrimental to their honour as well as the national well being that these women were allowed to act in this way and also the men who carried rice for the Marwaris from the villages during the time of famine were not to be excused from the public censure The agitators therefore strongly proposed to prohibit any male or female Manipuri from dealing with the Marwaris The partial treatment of the State authorities was also resented by the Manipuris who showed extreme regrets because the poor inhabitants were not allowed to have any place in the Sadar Bazar which was the centre of trade in the State On the other hand the Marwari merchants were allowed to keep shops and godowns at different villages of the State These shops and godowns were one of the chief means of their profiteering campaign and so it was a great desire of the people (of both the plains and the valley) to drive the Marwaris out from the villages

The Manipuris had a strong feeling of disgust against the Marwaris in the latter s method of making two different kinds of measuring maunds i e one of 48 seers and the other of 40 seers without sticking to the standard maund of 40 seers They used the maund of 48 seers while taking articles from the ignorant villagers and the maund of 40 seers while selling the articles out Thus they cheated the whole customers by taking recourse to illegal means of false weights and measurements [Upto 1940 the Marwaris made a maund by 48 to 50 seers in their intake On 20th November of the year the false weight and measurement was standardized for the first time to 40 seers within the British Reserve area only]

The written character of the Marwaris was totally foreign to the general public in Manipur except a handful of the Marwari merchants The script brought a great confusion and an inability to comprehend by the illiterate villagers when it came to reckon any account matter which was usually kept under the care of the Marwari *Mahajans* So by forging

accounts and documents in their *khata* they had ruined many families in Manipur Had not the Political Agent ventured to recognise any account or document written in the Marwari's character in the Law Courts except in English, Bengali or in Manipuri, it would have been a great salvation to the Manipuri inhabitants

The Manipuris were also extremely aggrieved to realize the hard lot of the carters and the cart-owners who owed money to the Marwaris The carters were compelled to carry the goods of the Marwari *Mahajans* at a lower rate of 8 annas, 12 annas or even Re 1 per maund than the ordinary market rate of hire, since they were not allowed to look to any means for their gains Over and above this the poor carters were to pay interest for the sum they owed to the *Mahajans* under the system of compound interest and to carry a few maunds in excess in every cart gratis There were occasional insertions in the *khata* of false and real accounts against the carter's name for taking the necessary implements of the cart The Marwaris even took interests on the value of the articles after turning them into capital accounts Thus at the end of the year when all the accounts were settled and the interests were changed into capital, in spite of their hard labour throughout the year to clear the debt by occasional payments from the little savings of the wages, the carters had usually found to their great astonishment about the same or even greater capital than that of the last year Then they were compelled to write another bond in the *khata* for the coming year The capital had thus gradually increased year by year till it was beyond their power of clearing the whole debt Following this illegal method the Marwaris had ruined many families of carters and cart-owners in Manipur

On 28th September 1920 a large gathering of about 2 000 Manipuris and Musalmans went to the Palace and they demanded the following five points from His Highness the Maharaja

1 To stop the export of rice immediately

2 Not to allow any Manipuri to enter the Marwaris shops either for selling or purchasing articles from them In case of any requirement they could do so in the Bengali and the Musalmans shops and if any Manipuri were to be seen in the Marwaris shops the man or the woman might be degraded from their caste

3 To allow the people to sit a daily bazar in the State Military Police ground or to give them a place for use as bazar in place of Khwairamban bazar i e Sadar and Maxwell Bazar or to allow them to sit in front of the Palace [Maharaja Chura Chand expressed that the State Military Police line would not be comfortable for the use as a daily bazar They could however use the ground in front of the Palace if the people actually had no intention to sit in the Sadar and Maxwell Bazar for the time being]

4 To stop arresting persons in the bazar and the wrong confinement of them in the Quarter Guard Actually the Marwari shopkeepers had filed petitions to the effect that the local Manipuris were expected to loot their shops and godowns in the bazar and as such men who were found in the bazar at late night without lanterns in hand were all arrested and

5 To issue an order to the villagers and the *Chaukidars* to effect a complete ban in purchasing large quantity of rice by the Marwari shopkeepers who lived in the village except for their family consumption This might be done the Maharaja expressed but he intended to allow the shopkeepers to purchase rice for their own use

By the middle of October 1920, the Marwaris strongly believed that they could bring the boycott to an end in a day or two if they stopped their supplies of some articles like dal salt sugar and kerosene oil to the Bengali and the Musalman shopkeepers with whom the Manipuris still had to deal with They believed that the boycott would be over by the end of the month and they would be able to get back their Manipuri employers The market place was deserted and the women went to various places at the outskirts of the open space The Manipuri Members of the State Darbar showed a complete ignorance of the authors and causes of the agitation, but they somehow passed a resolution offering to help in the case of any trouble arising from it The attitude of His Highness the Maharaja was anomalous, and although he showed a deplorable mark towards the boycott agitation, he issued notices to the market women to return to the *Hat* The Maharaja, however, took no real steps to have his wishes carried out and would not say who he was afraid of or why he could not enforce his wishes

Under a specific Clause of the *Telegraph Act of 1885*, the Local Government could enquire the contents of a telegram to be disclosed on the occurrence of a public emergency, which according to the Political Agent, the state of affairs in Manipur had amounted to Mr Clarke did not anticipate any serious breach of the peace and he could find no evidence of any personal ill feeling against either the Europeans or the other foreigners in Manipur The continuance of the bazar boycott was detrimental to the interests of everyone concerned and it was also felt extremely inconvenient, while personally Mr Clarke was put in the rather false position of having to ask the members of the Darbar for assistance when there was a Government contract the execution of which was considered most urgent Therefore, on 7th October 1920, Mr Clarke requested the Local Government to effect an enquiry from the Post Master General whether any telegram had been received by the Marwari

merchant Shermal Sudasukh which contained any secret information The inquiry finally led to conclusive evidence on the part played by His Highness the Maharaja and his private intrigues with the rich Marwari merchants of the Imphal town on money matters. Mr. Clarke got the telegraphic messages, which were dispatched and received by Shermal Sudasukh during the month of August 1920, and in one of the specific telegrams, Sudasukh was actually instructed to collect an amount of Rs 50, 000 from Maharaja Chura Chand

From Chhabrah, Calcutta
To Sudasukh, Imphal

Date 17th August 1920

Much distressed money badly wanted get from Maharaja Rs 50, 000 within fortnight and deposit in treasury ask treasury to wire Bengal Bank to pay us can't express full details herein letter follows ends

Actually Sudasukh had made a remittance of Rs 3, 000 and Rs 10, 000 in two installments to Chhabrah at the Calcutta Firm on 23rd and 27th August respectively. On being asked he confessed before Mr Clarke that the non-Manipuri shop-keepers actually helped the local agitators in the boycott, because, before the outbreak of the agitation the non-Manipuris were getting the same share of the Marwari trade But since they could not alone supply the Manipuri demand without the Marwari merchants they had to seek recourse to purchasing stocks from the Marwaris at the higher rate Sudasukh also informed that the smaller Marwari shopkeepers were being hard hit because the Manipuris owed them much money There was a heavy loss to the *Kayas* as recovery of their dues was extremely difficult from any Manipuri who owed to the foreigners [8]

His Highness the Maharaja once suggested to the Political Agent to start a Manipuri Co-Operative Society so as to enable the local people to get a share in the profit of the rice export trade Mr Clarke immediately gave his consent, but he assured that such a Society could not expect Government assistance or recognition if started under the auspices of the boycott agitation Even if started under less questionable conditions, he argued, the Manipuris had little confidence in one another's financial integrity and too little aptitude for business Mr Clarke well knew that it would be hopeless for the Manipuris to try to take up all at once by contracts such as the supply of rations to the Assam Rifles at Sadiya or Dacca Even the supply of rations to the Battalion at Imphal was found difficult for the Manipuris, as the contract was not for rice alone but for ghee, dal, sugar, oil and many other articles

The internal affairs of the State could not be well supervised and fairly executed by Maharaja Chura Chand alone and this brought him to seek repeated advice and instruction from the British. He laid bare all the economic and social problems of the State before the Political Agent and the Chief Commissioner of Assam who were ever ready to look into and instruct the Maharaja what to do and what not. Although the Maharaja was now prepared to force the Manipuri women to go back to the bazar he sought a guarantee from the Political Agent that he would not be blamed for this. He also realized that though the movement might have some strength, it would later on rouse great indignation if persisted in, as the women who frequented the market were losing money all the time and the land owners soon wanted to sell their new rice crop. *But the most important matter which the Maharaja wanted from the Political Agent was to make an assurance to the Government that he had not promoted the boycott agitation at all, and in no way he sympathized with the line of action that the agitators had taken*

With the cutting of the early rice crop in October 1921, the price of rice gradually fell and things became quite normal by the beginning of December.

(V)

The See-saw trades in rice export by the Marwaris in Manipur.

1922 – On account of the public agitation and the Marwari boycott the exports trade in rice was completely closed and export was prohibited. This had a good effect in keeping down the price of rice for some time

1923 – Export remained closed till December 1922. But since that date more than 80,000 *maunds* of rice were exported before 31st March 1923.

1924 –1,81,370 *maunds* of rice were exported and the trade was principally handled by the Marwari merchants only.

1925 – 1,99,710 *maunds* of rice were exported. Due to the partial failure of the crop, its export was prohibited from March 1925.

1926 – 1,55,014 *maunds* of rice were exported, and it was allowed for a period of six weeks only. Owing to the use of motor lorries, rice could be exported very much more rapidly than formerly when carts alone were used. Consequently prices rose rapidly that a dangerous situation was created and export of rice had to be closed again on 1st February 1926.

1927 – 40,729 *maunds* of rice were exported and this amount was restricted to units of the Assam Rifles and the Civil Station at Kohima.

It was felt doubtful whether it would be feasible to reopen export for some time to come Stocks of rice were low and the numbers of motor lorries plying on the Imphal-Dimapur cart road could export rice so rapidly Mr J C Higgins Esq , who was the Political Agent of Manipur, had a suspicion of an unlawful formation of a **Rice Ring** by the rich Marwaris

1928 47,499 *maunds* of rice were exported which were mostly for the Kohima Civil Station, some units of the Assam Rifles and some areas of Sibsagar where scarcity of rice was felt The normal price of rice was the desired effect of the general export of rice being prohibited, rice having only been exported for use in Kohima and in other very special cases

1929 1,65,983 *maunds* of rice were exported out of which 65,991 *maunds* were dispatched as Government rations Rice was exported after 1st January 1929 and it continued throughout the year without the price of rice being seriously affected

1930 1,64 510 *maunds* of rice were exported and out of this amount 73,026 *maunds* were supplied to meet the demands of the Government orders

1931 The total amount of rice exported in the year was 1,51,725 *maunds*

1932 During the year the price of rice fell considerably and at least 2,05,287 *maunds* of rice were exported from Manipur

1933 2,77,389 *maunds* of rice were exported and of this amount 19,759 *maunds* were supplied to meet the Government orders The price of rice was very low and it was dropped to 46 seers to one rupee during February and March of the year [The method of levying the export tax was changed, and the contract for collecting the tax was given to Messrs Shermal Sudasukh, Mansukh Roy Seraoji of Imphal as an experiment The new system was started in November 1932. Formerly the tax was collected by the issue of passes from the Political Agent's Office, but under the new system passes were issued by Sudasukh and his Firm, who made payments of fixed sums to the State half yearly]

1934 2,23,523 *maunds* of rice were exported, of this amount 8,441 *maunds* were supplied for Government purposes 1,28,905 *maunds* of *Chira* were also exported The price of rice was low throughout the year, averaging 41½ seers to one rupee No embargo was placed on the export of rice in the year The contract with Messrs Shermal Sudasukh, Mansukh Roy Seraoji for collecting the export tax

was terminated in the year and a new contract was made at a higher rate with Messrs Mangalchand Meghraj and Co, of Imphal who paid to the State Rs 73 000 a year The annual receipts from power became less certain as they depended on almost entirely on rice mills If the export of rice were to be stopped on account of bad harvests or for any other reason the income of the Hydro Electric Board from power also fell awfully seriously

1935 2 54 619 *maunds* of rice and 1,39 766 *maunds* of *Chira* were exported between April 1934 and March 1935 It was not possible to predict with accuracy the amount of current likely to be needed for power because it had to depend almost entirely on the amount of rice to be exported So long as the harvests were good and there was a sufficient stock of rice in Manipur to allow export a good demand for current for electric motors could be easily expected

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER FIVE

The Progress of a Pilgrim.

1 *Sanad* granted to His Highness Raja Chura Chand Singh C B E Raja of Manipur
I hereby confer upon Your Highness the title of Maharaja as an hereditary distinction for your services in connection with the War
Delhi — Chelmsford
The 1 January 1918 — Viceroy & Governor General Of India

2 On 11th November 1918 the new Government of Germany signed the Armistice and the First World War came to an end

3 J C Higgins I C S President Manipur State Darbar *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1916 1917 Thacker Spink & Co Calcutta 1917 p 9

4 C Gimson I C S President Manipur State Darbar *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1919 1920 printed at the State Printing Press Imphal 1920 p 9

5 C S Mullan M A I C S President Manipur State Darbar *Administration Report of Manipur State* for the year 1921 1922 Imphal printed at the State Printing Press 1922 p 11

6 See L O Clarke Esq I C S Political Agent s Memo No 1068 of 23rd September 1920 to C S Mullan Esq PMSD

7 See A joint petition of the Manipur Sate subjects to the Judicial Member Manipur State Darbar for redressing the wrongs they suffered at the hands of the Marwaris

8 The secret intrigue of Maharaja Chura Chand with the rich Marwari merchants in the State was clearly evident from a Confidential Note of the Political Agent addressed to Mr A W Botham of the Assam Administration (12' November 1920) There are no apparent indications of any quarrel between the Maharaja and Shermal Sudasukh of Imphal At the Diwali festival the Marwari merchant borrowed lamps from the Palace for his house decoration and the Maharaja has also lent Sudasukh his best motor driver to drive Sudasukh s new lorry Incidentally I may remark that their Manipuri motor drivers are working for the Marwaris though they will not enter their houses

CHAPTER SIX

(I)

The Usual Celebration of Games and Banquets
&
The Most Loyal and Absentee Maharaja of Manipur

Most of the high officials of the Assam Administration came to Manipur for two purposes- one for official inspection of the different local institutions and the other (which seemed more important to the Europeans) was as a pleasure trip and to enjoy hunting and bird shooting His Excellency Sir William Sinclair Marris (K C S I K C I E) Governor of Assam came to Manipur in January 1921 with the same intention like his fellow officials of former days During his three days stay in Manipur he had briefly inspected some of the local institutions and went direct to Potsangbam where a shoot was already arranged in his honour by His Highness the Maharaja Three days were spent on the Loktak Lake and His Excellency had enjoyed a good sport when he shot down more than 500 birds of the local variety

Mr C S Mullan President of the Manipur State Darbar accompanied Maharaja Chura Chand when the latter went to Calcutta in December 1921 on the occasion of the visit of His Royal Highness Edward the Prince of Wales to that city and the Manipuri Maharaja was accorded the honour of a private interview with His Royal Highness It was thought a great privilege when the Prince expressed his great interest in Manipur and especially in the Manipuri Polo However the Prince s visit to India was boycotted by the Indian National Congress and the immense success of the peaceful boycott by the Indians of all functions in connection with the Prince s visit certainly indicated the depth of the Indian disaffection towards Britain the strength of the hold of the Indian National Congress over the peoples mind and was an eye opener to the British Government

His Highness the Maharaja s frequent tours outside the State and his long stay at different pilgrimages in the country was one of the main factors which certainly caused the social and economic distress on the peoples lot because in his absence no important Darbar resolutions in connection with public interest could be passed without his written consent Other members of the Darbar and the Vice President who was always a

European, had always to take advice from the Maharaja except the Political Agent who could veto any Darbar resolutions as and when they did not concern local customs and usages The cause of the grievances felt by the local people could not be ventilated in a proper manner through the handlings of the European officers and matters became very awkward by the mid 1920s as to who would meliorate the unwholesome affairs of the State

It was not long after the agitations of the local people that His Highness the Maharaja had twice visited Shillong On the first occasion he remained there for about a month, and on the second trip, he was accompanied by Her Highness the Maharani and her children and remained there for three months" Next year again the Maharaja visited Shillong for two times and his absence this time brought all the important State matters to remain unattended for months together His Highness the Maharaja was barely 40 years old when he married his sixth wife on 2nd February 1925 The new Rani was called Maisnam Subadani In the same month (after the marriage ceremony) the Maharaja proceeded to Raipur to look after his son He visited Puri *en route* and from Raipur he went on a pilgrimage to Brindaban and thence to Parsuram Kund in Sadiya where Mr C G Crawford, President of the Manipur State Darbar accompanied him Next year the Maharaja again visited Shillong on two occasions but this time he stayed a little longer and purchased a fine residence (*Inglisby*) at Shillong which cost him a sum of Rs 85 000 From Shillong the Maharaja did not come back to Manipur direct but instead he went to Silchar to be present at the yearly *Assam Rifles Week* that was being held there in January 1926

Heavy expenses were incurred and were freely drawn from the State s Exchequer on account of the various expenditures of the *Maharaja s Civil List* and the additional unforeseen expenditures as and when high officials of the Assam Administration visited the State The total expenditure spent on the *Maharaja s Civil List* never exceeded by the total annual amount of expenses earmarked for the State Works The following table would indicate comparative expenses incurred on the two heads of the *Maharaja s Civil List* and the State Works

Year	Maharaja s Civil List Rs	Manipur State Works Rs
1920	1 67 262	1 51 801
1921	1 65 610	1 59 579
1922	1 58 746	1 12 685
1923	1 48 598	1 25 415

Year	Maharaja's Civil List Rs	Manipur State Works Rs
1924	1 52 258	1 24 785
1925	1 48 694	2 16 361
1926	1 50 031	1 36 143
1927	1 54 071	1 38 919
1928	1 56 192	1 37 679
1929	1 55 113	1 47 333
1930	1 65 405	1 26 264

The figures of the State account invested for an "individual" and for the whole of the State public works were never questioned and His Highness the Maharaja was also over protective for the Civil List lest the amount should be reduced any time

The visit of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India Lord Irwin to the Manipur State in January 1931 was considered the most outstanding event of the year The Viceroy came with Lady Irwin Anne Wood (their daughter) and a friend called Lady Worsley The party arrived on 6th January 1931 and were met by His Highness the Maharaja and his officials at Chingmeirong The Viceroy was given treatment of a very courteous manner by His Highness the Maharaja whereas during his visit to India he was already put in a position of great storm and stress by all the members of the Indian National Congress throughout the dominion In April 1930 the Indian National Congress had started the Civil Disobedience Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who himself with some agitators made a spectacular march to Dandi and deliberately broke the salt ban of the Government But in Manipur there was no such political organisation nor the people were fully informed of the social disturbances that took place outside the State The Maharaja and the people of the State were only too submissive to the British and remained loyal to the dictates of the Paramount Power On the first day of arrival Maharaja Chura Chand made arrangements for Their Excellencies to watch a parade of Hill men representatives of numerous tribes being called down from the hills 1 100 Hill men were collected from all parts of the hills for the parade, and a special camp was made for them at Imphal where they were housed and fed by the State for three days The Excellencies party went on to witness a Manipuri boat race at the Palace and at night the Maharaja gave a banquet in honour of his guests followed by some Manipuri dancing at the Darbar Hall C W L Harvey President of the Manipur State Darbar described the programme of Their Excellencies pleasure trip' to Manipur' under the following

The party was treated to an exhibition of Manipuri hockey wrestling and Polo the latter in particular being a wonderful display and giving great pleasure to the onlookers In the afternoon they had some enjoyable partridge shooting and then proceeded

to Potsangbam where His Highness the Maharaja had arranged a most comfortable camp That night two exhibition dances were given in camp the first the famous *Lai Haraoba* dance by dancers from Moirang and the second a hill dance carried out by Kabui Nagas The next morning there was an early duck shoot on the Loktak and the party returned to Imphal that afternoon Their Excellencies left on the morning of the 9 of January (1931) and so ended an event that will remain long in the memory of the State

An amount of Rs 30 000 was originally set aside for expenditure in connection with His Excellency the Viceroy's visit to the Manipur State, but this was exceeded by Rs 4 948 totaling to 34,948 which was withdrawn from the State Reserve Fund

In 1932 two important delegations were sent from Manipur, the object of which was to lay certain important matters before the Government of India concerning the State s administration and its relationship with the Government of India through the Government of Assam Captain C W L Harvey (M C I A) PMSD Rajkumar Dumbra Singh Senapati (Judicial Member, MSD) and Lairenmayum Ibungohal Singh (B A B L , Forest and Water Woks Member MSD) were deputed by the Maharaja to go to Delhi and to represent the matters on his behalf to the Political Secretary This they did and were granted an interview by Sir Charles Watson (K C I E C S I) Political Secretary to the Government of India, at Delhi, on 10th February 1932

A second delegation consisting of Mr Harvey and Rajkumar Dumbra Singh Senapati was again deputed by His Highness the Maharaja to attend before the Indian States Committee and to represent the case of the Manipur State in certain matters which fell within that Committee s terms of reference The Committee however invited the State s representatives to meet them at Simla and the deputation had accordingly presented the State s case before the Committee at Simla on 14th April 1932

The 25th (Silver) anniversary of His Highness the Maharaja s Government of the Manipur State and the existence of the State Darbar for 25 years since the attainment of the Maharaja s majority occurred in 1932 To celebrate the occasion it was decided to afford general relief by the remission of arrears of certain land revenue water rate agricultural loans etc and in all Rs 86, 122 were remitted on this account His Highness the Maharaja spent more than 230 days in the year travelling outside the State while Manipur had suffered from the general financial depression of all markets with the result that all the cultivators had little money to pay their revenue and found it increasingly difficult to borrow money Even the hill men of the State living as they did on the outskirts of

civilization were adversely affected by the scarcity of money during the universal financial depression chiefly because they were unable to find the usual market for their sales The Maharaja again visited Shillong on three occasions during this period to see His Excellency the Governor of Assam and also to procure medical treatment for his daughter Maharaj Kumari Tombisana He went to Mathura twice on a pilgrimage and to celebrate the annual *Utsob* of the deceased Maharaj Kumari Tamphasana he also went to Ajmer to attend the prize giving ceremony at the College, returning *via* Nabadwip Again early in January 1933, the Maharaja went to Calcutta to get further treatment for M K Tombisana whose serious illness had caused much anxiety and he was still there at Calcutta upto the end of March 1933

Apart from a brief supervision of the State s administration His Highness the Maharaja s personal ambitions were fixed with the arrangement and warm reception of the British officials who came to the State on official visits Next to it, the Maharaja was extremely fond of whiling away time at the different pilgrimages outside the State It was by virtue of his loyalty to the British and his "irrational financial contribution' during the war period that the Maharaja was distinguished in January 1934 by being created a **Knight Commander of the Star of India** (K C S I) in recognition of the work did for the British but not for the people of his State When His Excellency Sir Michael Keane the Governor of Assam, visited the State in the last week of January 1934, His Highness the Maharaja offered the same repeated courtesy of

1 A banquet in honour of his guests
2 Entertainment programmes of Manipuri dancing Manipuri hockey wrestling and Manipuri Polo match and
3 A compulsory shooting camp either at Loktak Potsangbam or Laphupat etc

A second and more important personal habit of the Maharaja was to find himself free and far from the cries of the aggrieved public It was why the Maharaja had to visit Shillong repeatedly to spend time in the royal house of the fine property called *Inglisby* which was kept for the private use of the Maharaja only From Shillong he would go to Nabadwip and thence to Ajmer and Radhakund In February 1934 the Maharaja went to New Delhi for the investiture with the order of K C S I and had to return to the State only in March

In some of the Indian Provinces representative institutions of a parliamentary form with characteristics of responsible government had begun to emerge in the early 1920s But the popular movements in Manipur

were yet to acquire any measure of power and the political set-up if any, still continued to be largely an arrangement arrived at between the Maharaja and the British Government In the absence of an effective challenge to the authority of the Maharaja, the State continued to be unbridled with autocracies where democratic institutions did not exist The British authorities were not unaware of the need to improve the administration in Manipur, and they in fact, repeatedly advised the Maharaja to grant good government to the people of the State The Maharaja however, did not pay heed to these instructions and he ruled not for the benefit of the people but for his own Opinions forwarded by Lord Hardinge, Lord Chelmsford and Lord Reading on the relationship of the Ruler and the ruled could find the least vestige in Manipur The life of the community wholly depended on the wishes of the Ruler It was mainly due to the intransigent attitude of the Maharaja of Manipur where an organ for associating people with the administration called the DARBAR existed which was itself unreal to a large extent Members of the Darbar could discuss administration but they could not control any part of it The whole Government was still the Government of the Ruler, advised by such Members as he chose to appoint

The outbreak of the First World War and the participation of the Manipur Labour Corps in it brought them into contact with the outside world It was during this War that the British Government had announced its august declaration promising the "right of self determination" to the Indian people In many parts of the country various local institutions and organizations came into existence like the Baroda Praja Mandal, Indore Praja Mandal and Idar Praja Mandal etc., whereas in Manipur there was no such thing upto the early parts of 1930s. This left the people of the State entirely at the mercy of the Maharaja's wishes who still remained the Best Judge and who afforded no protection to the people against incursions of their civil rights

Rulers in the other Native States of India had endeavoured with what lay in their power to modernize their administration, to make it more efficient, to make their subjects more prosperous, progressive and more contented Developments occurred in the construction of railways, roads, the foundation and endowments of colleges and schools, hospital and dispensaries and in the development of Co-Operative Societies They did not care the less in the encouragement of improved agricultural methods among the cultivators, in the provision of water works at the greater centers, in the progress of male and female education and medical relief, in the establishment of High Courts on the British Indian model In various other ways, the Rulers strove hard to realize the modern ideas of progress

Maharaja Chura Chand had however, time and again emphasized the theory that no one could bring an obliteration of the political set-up which he had in his State, and he always tried to preserve the age-old traditions and institutions as he wished Under such a situation it was difficult for any organisation to flourish in the State

Although non-political agitations had started in Manipur as early as 1904, the internal autonomy of the Maharaja and his absolutism on many social aspects were never questioned until the last part of the 1930s The uprisings which marked the awakening of a social consciousness as well as the determination of the people to get their grievances redressed had certainly brought about a change in the Manipuri society If the movements lacked a broad civic outlook and suffered from immaturity and want of competent leadership, many of them were the outcome of the new political awakening The movements were both political and economic in character as was evident during the Bazar Boycott of 1920 the water and vehicle tax agitations etc In other States of India the demands of the people were of a higher plane like the grant of responsible government, special safeguards to minorities in all spheres freedom of life liberty and property grant of fundamental rights to the people compulsory primary education, discontinuance of the *Prince s Protection Act* the abolition of monopoly in certain articles and reduction of land revenue etc However, the demands of the people in Manipur were essentially agrarian in character based on the peoples economic demands such as the reduction of land revenue and rent etc Unfortunately in Manipur the local people who had hardly any previous political experience led the movements, and yet, the people resorted to civil disobedience movement as in the case of the *Pothang* agitation of 1913 and the Bazar Boycott of the early 1920s

Maharaja Chura Chand had the audacity to ban any political organisation in the State and he was determined to crush any political demand ruthlessly at all costs Instead of responding to the wishes and aspirations of the people the Maharaja chose to malign their political movements as communal in character While constitutional reforms took place at a rapid progress in British India His Highness the Maharaja totally ignored the Imperial policy and no attempt was made to introduce even an elementary form of responsible government in the State The British Government neither obstructed any constitutional advance which a Ruler proposed to initiate in his State nor had they forced any Ruler to introduce such reforms in a State The obligations of the Paramount Power were simply extended to protecting the Maharaja against violence and disorder

and to advising and assisting him in remedying the legitimate grievances of the public as might be found to exist This policy certainly encouraged the Maharaja to resist popular demands of the people in the hope that the British would always side with him in safeguarding the peace and security of the State Though intervention of the Paramount Power in the form of advice to the Maharaja was promised for remedying legitimate grievances of the people, it was almost invariably exercised to curb the popular movements when it failed to be controlled by the Maharaja

In Manipur the late 1930s had witnessed the growth of popular movements in the State which, much as the Maharaja feared were coming more and more under the influence of the Congress leaders As early as 1921-22 the Manipuri clothes which formed the most valuable cottage industry in the State were exported and it rose considerably due no doubt to the *Swadeshi Movement* in India [3] As it happened however the Maharaja in his effort to crush the movements not only drove the politically conscious sections of his population into the struggle but also led the Congress workers to associate themselves with the peoples struggle increasingly

Fortunately in Manipur incarceration in jails in connection with the different agitations brought many of the people into contact with politically oriented prisoners who could provide the agitators with better understanding and insight A new dawn came into the minds of the Manipuris who had received education from outside the State The news of the formation of several States peoples' organisation was no longer obscure happenings in the minds of the local people During the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress with Pandit Matilal Nehru as the President in 1928 many people of the Manipur State welcomed the assurance of the party in their sympathy and support extended to all for a legitimate and peaceful struggle of any State's people

During the hectic political agitations and constitutional demands of the Indian people as a whole the first Manipur State s peoples organisation called the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha was inaugurated on 30th May 1934 In January of the year, the British already distinguished Maharaja Chura Chand by being created a *Knight Commander of the Star of India* and in the next month (February 1934) the Maharaja went to New Delhi for the investiture In the first instance the Maharaja was the elect President of the Mahasabha and most of the State officials in Manipur had joined the Mahasabha as voluntary members The educated Manipuris of the time definitely borrowed the aims and objectives of the All India

Hindu Mahasabha, which actually had come into existence in 1916 The Mahasabha was started as an organisation for social reforms but it was gradually drifted into politics in order to safeguard the interests of the Hindus as against the Muslims The Sabha stood for the maintenance, protection and promotion of the Hindu race, Hindu culture and Hindu civilization and the advancement of the glory of the *Hindu Rashtra* and with a view to securing them, the attainment of **Purna Swaraj.**

The formation of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha occurred late in Manipur only when Mr Savarkar had announced the policy and programme of the All India Hindu Mahasabha in 1933 Like the All India pattern the Manipuri Mahasabha also aimed to establish a democratic State in Manipur based on the cultural heritage of the land It strove for the consolidation of all sections of the people into one organized whole by assuring them equal rights and opportunities and to share equal responsibilities It aimed at the removal of all sorts of social inequalities and injustices suffered by the people in the hands of the higher authorities

The Manipuri Mahasabha stood for cow protection and the abolition of cow slaughter It condemned separatist tendencies, but aspired to turn Manipur into a well knit homogeneous State and not a loose combination of different tribes and sections of people As regards the economic programme, the Mahasabha advocated rapid industrialization of the land 'grow more food campaign , an enforcement of adequate national income and prevention of concentration of money in the hands of a few Marwari merchants in Manipur The organisation of the Mahasabha was also similar with those of the Indian National Congress and the All India Hindu Mahasabha in its composition of the Working Committee, the Branch Working Committee (i e , at Mandalay Surma Valley Silchar and Cachar etc) and its Reception Committee

(II)

Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha & the Political Renaissance in Manipur

The Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha was a brainchild of one man called Hijam Irabot Singh who was a member of the Sadar Panchayet Court Irabot joined his service as Member of the Court on 1st April 1930 It was after four years of service in the Court that he first initiated the foundation of the Mahasabha with His Highness the Maharaja as the elect President and with full sanction of the Manipur State Darbar The Mahasabha had its first social gathering with an exhibition of the local

Manipuri products on 30th May 1934 and all the resolutions adopted were approved by His Highness the Maharaja. As there was no point highlighting any political aspiration of the people the Maharaja readily accepted to be the President of the Mahasabha. The following were some of the resolutions which were non political in nature and which the Maharaja offered his royal acceptance.[4]

1. This conference requests all the Manipurees of the Surma Valley to remove that sectional ill feeling which it is learnt with great regret in cropping up in our body social between the Meiteis and the Bisnupriyas owing to the incisive sectionalism and which is a non entity in Manipur the homeland of all the Manipurees and advises them to withdraw the internecinely segregating and invidious portions in their memorials sent up to the Assam Government. [Sic.]

2. His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur be venerated as the *de jure* socio religious head of all the Hindu Manipurees.

3. The Local Governments of Assam, Bengal and Burma be moved so that all the Manipurees domiciled outside Manipur, the officials and the non officials indiscriminately may attend the future Sessions of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha *should political matters be not touched* and a copy of the resolutions of this Session along with a copy of the English rendering of the same be sent to these Governments for their perusal. [Sic.]

4. His Highness the Maharaja be requested to prohibit henceforward the Manipuree Brahmins from marrying the ladies of the other Manipuree castes as such marriage has been source of disturbance in social equilibrium and distress to such ladies when divorced and divorce on flimsy grounds in such marriages already existing be not allowed. [Sic.]

The Mahasabha was at first backed up with strong moral obligations by a number of educated Manipuris as well as people with high official positions in the State administration. The State officials who declared themselves to be active members of the Mahasabha had proposed most of the Mahasabha resolutions in its first session. They were Sougaijam Somorendra Singh B.A. (Additional Member Manipur State Darbar), H. Dwijamani Sarma M.A. (Officiating Deputy Inspector of Schools), I. Ibungohal Singh B.A. B.L. (Additional Member Manipur State Darbar), S. Nadia Singh B.A. (Additional Member Manipur State Darbar), H. Irabot Singh (Member, Sadar Panchayet Court), A. Dorendrajit Singh B.A., Ch. Pishak Singh B.A., Atombapu Sarma *Vidyaratna*, Lalit Madhab Chatterjee, Maimom Madhumangal Singh, Angom Janaki Nath Singh (A.D.C. to His Highness the Maharaja) and Sinam Krishna Mohan Singh, M.A. B.L. etc.

The resolutions of the Mahasabha's 1st session only highlighted the socio economic, cultural and religious aspects of the people and there was no special mention of the political grievances already felt and

anticipated by the people to be redressed immediately Upto the 1st session the aims of the resolutions were for a protection and promotion of all that had contributed to the advancement of Hindu culture and as a means to that end to establish an *Akhanda Manipur* or Undivided Manipur State

The Second Session of the Mahasabha was held at Tarapur (Silchar) on 30th January 1936 but prior to the session Sinam Krishna Mohan Singh M A B L who was then General Secretary of the Mahasabha handed over his charge to Irabot Singh on 20th October 1935 an arrangement which was approved by the Working Committee of the Mahasabha There was no doubt that some of the resolutions (approved by His Highness the Maharaja) had definitely showed signs of leaning towards political aspirations of the people as the following well illustrated the meaning

1 For the convenience of the Manipuri pilgrims and inter District and inter Provincial Manipuri traders representations be made to the Railway and Shipping authorities for favour of employing Manipuris in the Station lying near the Manipur settlements in different Districts of India and Burma [S c]

2 His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur be prayed for approval that co dining may be allowed in the house of *Manipuri Gonok (Acharya Brahmins)* who are themselves already allowed to dine in a line with other Manipuris outside their houses

3 The Assam Bengal Manipuri Society be established for the educational economical and moral advancement of the Manipuri community who live in both Manipur and Burma

On 5th February 1937, Irabot requested the Judicial Member of the Darbar to allow him for a trip to Mandalay where he intended to join the 3rd annual session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha As the session had to commence from 28th February 1937 Irabot requested to grant him leave of absence from the Sadar Panchayet Court (while on suspension) from 15th February to 20th March 1937 Only on 3rd March the Judicial Member s Memo was brought up for discussion by the Darbar Members but with no special remarks By this time the Mahasabha session had already started His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur was the elect President of the Mahasabha upto the Tarapur Session of 1936 but during the 3rd session at Mandalay (March 1937) the Maharaja and Atomchouba Singh *Angom Ningthou* (President, Cherap Court) who was formerly the Vice President of the Mahasabha, jointly sent a telegraphic message at Mandalay informing that they would not be coming to join the 3rd session The chair of the Mahasabha President was thus left vacant, and on 27th February 1937 Irabot was appointed Vice President of the Mahasabha

Actually Maharaja Chura Chand left the State for Cachar and Nabadwip on 6th January 1936 and returned on 3rd June, thus completing the Maharaja's *normal routine of absence from the State's duties* for a period of complete five months! The Maharaja spent 227 days in touring in British India in various places like Nabadwip, Calcutta and Shillong etc. He left Imphal for Nabadwip on 23rd October 1936 and returned on 4th December, and he left again for Nabadwip and Calcutta on 25th December 1936, and did not return upto the last week of June 1937. It was during these long and hectic royal trips that the Maharaja had missed his presence at the 3rd session at Mandalay. Although originally the Mahasabha was meant for a congregation of all the Manipuris with an aim to promote the Hindu religion and to protect the religious rights of the people, during the 3rd session of the Mahasabha at Mandalay some of the following political resolutions were made and were approved by the Working Committee on 1st March 1937:[6]

1."For the sake of convenience for the Hindu Manipuris living in Burma, the Local Government be approached to allot seats in the posts of Municipal Commissioners and Honorary Magistrates of Mandalay town.

2."The Burma and India Governments be approached to preserve intact the already existing commercial relations between Burma and Manipur.

3."One M.E. School where Manipuri boys can learn Manipuri language be established in the town of Mandalay and Local authorities there be approached to help the institution

4."Sj Lalita Madhab Chatterjee be appointed General Secretary of the Mahasabha."

The *Brahma Sabha* of Manipur (a Council of the Manipuri Brahmins) was with a great enthusiasm patronized by His Highness the Maharaja and this Council was no doubt the ROOT CAUSE of all the social evils brought in the State. During the 1920 bazar boycott agitation against the Marwari exploiters, the *Brahma Sabha* had tried to outcast some unfortunate Manipuri women, who attended the Imphal bazar,[7] but to the bad luck of the *Sabha*, Dumbra Singh, Senapati (Judicial Member of the Darbar) had unconditionally opposed to the powerful dictates of the *Brahma Sabha*. There was a strong feeling of dissatisfaction with the State Administration over the *Mangba-Sengba* scandal, which became a predominant social issue of the year 1938. Well-to-do Brahmins had gone round the villages informing people that the *Brahma Sabha* had declared them *Mangba* or outcast and offering for a consideration to have them declared *Sengba* or purified. Similar methods were also used to persuade villagers to pay Brahmins for the recovery of cattle, which the Brahmins had themselves stolen. Although such Brahmins were often not members

of the *Brahma Sabha* and were in any case usually acting without its authority the fact that the Maharaja was the head of the *Brahma Sabha* caused a loss of confidence in the Administration The Darbar, who were somewhat out of touch with the public also shared in this loss of confidence in this case unjustly having taken rigorous and successful action to put a stop to the scandal"

In the beginning of 1938 the blackmail business of the *Mangba Sengba* scandal had swept over the whole of Manipur Gangs of bullies were quartering the country demanding money from the public and threatening those who refused to pay it with religious excommunication These scoundrels from the poor and humble people of the State squeezed many thousands of rupees This social corruption was found highly endemic in Manipur Religious excommunications in Manipur were made by His Highness the Maharaja on the advice of the *Brahma Sabha* Mr A R H MacDonald Esq I C S who recently joined as the President of the Manipur State Darbar on 9th February 1937 had a serious intention to check the misdoing and black-mailing habits of the members of the *Brahma Sabha* He at first requested the *Sabha* to be scrupulously careful in its inquiries before the *Sabha* had to advise the Maharaja to order an excommunication If it were generally known that no man could be excommunicated without a thorough and a just inquiry into his particular case the public would not have been so abjectly terrified of the blackmailing *Brahma Sabha* imposters It was not known whether the excommunication inflicted by the *Brahma Sabha* on a whole village for a religious irregularity committed by one or more of its inhabitants was in consonance with the Hindu Laws, and if so, in what circumstances Mr MacDonald therefore invited the members of the *Brahma Sabha* with approval of His Highness the Maharaja and in conjunction with the Members of the Darbar to publish a JOINT NOTICE which he himself drafted on 2nd April 1938 '

Be it known unto all men that if any person by threats of excommunication or of any other religious penalty endeavours to extort money or other goods from the public or from any individual that person is a criminal and is acting without any authority from His Highness the Maharaja or from the Darbar and from the *Brahma Sabha* His Highness the Maharaja and the Darbar and the *Brahma Sabha* pledge themselves to do their utmost to protect the public from the wickedness of such persons and to cause such persons to be punished according to their deserts It is the duty of all Officers, of all Village *Chowkidars* and *Nambors* and of all good citizens to report such persons immediately to the Police or to the Courts of Justice Any man who gives anything to such persons is **a Fool, a Coward and a Traitor**"

The chief causes of the scandal of *Mangba-Sengba* cases seemed to be the following

1 There was often no definite declaration made by any authority to say who was *Mangba* or whether any particular person was *Mangba* or not The result was that the minds of the people were full of fears rumour and suspicions

2 Persons were often declared or suggested to be *Mangba* without any proper inquiry and without even giving them the opportunity to be heard

3 When a person was declared or suggested to be *Mangba* it was often difficult or impossible to fix the responsibility for that declaration or suggestion or to say whether it was authoritative or merely calumniatory

These social evils created by the *Mangba Sengba* business were undoubtedly very serious and the Maharaja under the garb of the *Brahma Sabha* certainly caused great discontent among the Manipuri public Mr MacDonald had therefore drafted the following Proposed Orders on 8[th] June 1938 and asked the Darbar Members to pass it officially

PROPOSED ORDERS

1 No Manipuri Hindu may be made *Mangba* except by a written Certificate of Excommunication

2 The Certificate of Excommunication must give the full name of the person made *Mangba* must set forth as exactly as possible all the facts which are the reasons why he is made *Mangba* and must be signed by at least seven members of the *Brahma Sabha* The Certificate must purport to be final and no person may be made *Mangba* temporarily or pending inquiry or until some act has been performed

3 The Certificate of Excommunication shall as soon as possible be published in the following manner (a) One copy will be sent by the *Brahma Sabha* to the Judicial Member of the Darbar (b) One copy will be given by the *Brahma Sabha* to the person made *Mangba* or if he cannot be found left at the place where he usually resides (c) The contents will be made public by the *Brahma Sabha* in the neighbourhood of the place where the person made *Mangba* usually resides

4 Until a Certificate of Excommunication as described in No 2 has been published against a person in the manner prescribed under No 3 it is forbidden for any one to say or deliberately to suggest that that person is *Mangba* [Exceptions It is permitted for any one to make a true statement of something which he had himself seen with his own eyes Within the precincts of the Palace and of the temple of Govindaji it is permitted for any one to make any true statement even if the statement is merely that the speaker heard some one else say something It is permitted for any one to make any true statement in answer to a State servant who is asking questions in the execution of his duty *A mere omission*

to invite a person to any feast or ceremony is not, by itself, a suggestion that, that person is Mangba]

5. If a person has been made *Mangba* by a Certificate of Excommunication and wishes to deny the truth of the facts which are set forth in the Certificate as reasons why he is made *Mangba*, he may within 30 days of the Certificate having been published, apply to the Judicial Darbar to decide on the truth of those facts.

6. When application has been made under No.5, the Judicial Member shall, as soon as possible, give the applicant and the signatories of the Certificate opportunity to be heard, to produce evidence, and to cross-examine each other and each other's witnesses.

7 If after the inquiry described in No 6, the Darbar decides that the facts set forth in the Certificate, as the reasons why the applicant is made *Mangba* are not true, or are not proved, the Darbar shall cancel the Certificate. The Darbar shall as soon as possible, publish a notice of cancellation by sending a copy to the *Brahma Sabha* and a copy to the applicant and by making the contents public in the neighbourhood of the place where the applicant usually resides. [Note: The Darbar has no power to pronounce upon questions of doctrines If the facts set forth in the Certificate of Excommunication are found to be true, the Darbar cannot cancel the Certificate merely on the ground that those facts, even if true, are not adequate reasons for making a person *Mangba*.]

8. A Certificate of Excommunication may also be cancelled at any time by His Highness the Maharaja.

9. After the cancellation of any Certificate of Excommunication has been published, it is absolutely forbidden for any one to say, or deliberately to suggest, that the person against whom the Certificate was issued is *Mangba* because of the facts set forth therein; and it is also forbidden for any one to say or deliberately to suggest, that, that person is *Mangba* because of other facts, unless either a fresh Certificate of Excommunication has been published against that person.

10 Whatsoever herein – before notwithstanding, it is absolutely forbidden for any one to say, or deliberately to suggest, that any person is '*Mangba*' merely because that person has mixed with a second person, unless, at the time of the alleged mixing, a Certificate of Excommunication, as described in No.2, had been published against that second person in the manner prescribed in No 3, and had not been cancelled

11 If the Judicial Darbar cancels any Certificate of Excommunication under No 7 and also finds that the Certificate was issued without an inquiry having been made in good faith to ascertain the truth of the facts set forth therein, the Darbar may sentence each or any of the signatories of the Certificate to imprisonment which may extend to two years, or to fine, or to both, and may also order each or any of the signatories to pay any amount of compensation to the person against whom the Certificate was issued.

12 Any one convicted of having infringed Nos.4, 9 and 10 may be sentenced to imprisonment which may extend to two years, or to fine, or to both, and may also be ordered to pay any amount of compensation to the person said or

deliberately suggested to be *Mangba* The Judicial Darbar must try all cases under this order

13 These orders do not supersede the ordinary Law against defamation but are additional to that Law

14 These orders come into force one month after the day on which they receive His Highness the Maharaja s assent and will continue in force unless amended or repealed *for three years* Their period may be extended beyond three years if necessary by a subsequent Act

The proposed Orders of Mr MacDonald on the *Mangba Sengba* cases were discussed by the Members of the Darbar on 8[th] June 1938 and they resolved that both the members of the Darbar and of the *Brahma Sabha* should be asked to give their views in writing In fact the situation was extremely unhealthy both for the *Brahma Sabha* and for the common laity It was full of danger not only to the State religion itself but also to the public tranquility It was for this reason that Mr A R H MacDonald had *the temerity to make suggestions in a matter which was primarily one to be decided by the Hindus only* The aims of the **Proposed Orders** drafted by Mr MacDonald were to check the circulation of malicious rumours and to substitute the open and declared authority of the *Brahma Sabha* for the regime of fear and suspicion It was to restore the 'traditional principle in Manipur whereby a man accused of a religious offence which he denied was entitled to have the facts tried in a secular court though the religious penalty appropriate to those facts must always be decided by the ecclesiastical court MacDonald s proposal was also to make it possible for everybody to know for certain who was *Mangba* and who was not Under the system of the *Brahma Sabha* there were many cases where neither the accused not the public nor the members themselves of the *Brahma Sabha* could say whether the accused was *Mangba* or not and thus was an intolerable state of affairs for all concerned The most important objective of Mr MacDonald s proposal was to ensure that no member of the *Brahma Sabha* would lightly abuse the very ' Great power with which as an important body of the Maharaja s principal advisers in religious matters the *Brahma Sabha* had been entrusted [11]

Opinions of the Darbar Members on Mangba Sengba

&

Injunction Order and Prayaschit Money

Some Hindu Members of the Manipur State Darbar who were the close adherents of His Highness the Maharaja wanted to frame governing the rules of *Mangba Sengba* cases more in favour of the Maharaja s wishes than to the convenience of the public

Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata the second son of the Maharaja was barely 25 (twenty five) years old when he joined to the high post of the Darbar as an Ordinary Member on 13th February 1936. He was the first Member of the Darbar who gave his opinion on the *Mangba Sengba* case and as he was not a fully matured person his suggestions on the case seemed and were considered worthless. He submitted his Opinion on 20th June 1938 to the President (MSD).[12]

Complaints from the people on the *Brahma Sabha* should be heard and tried by the Judicial Darbar. Where facts are established and the complaints proved right the *Brahma Sabha* should be asked to give their views. If this suggestion were followed Order No 5, 6, 7 and 11 will not be necessary. Order No 2 will need a minor modification I think.

One of the main causes of the social malaise brought by the *Mangba Sengba* scandal was the abuse of the power of trying and enquiring religious cases of Manipuri Hindus by members of the *Brahma Sabha*. Formerly this body existed simply as an advisory body in religious matters but in the late 1930s they had assumed the power of trying and enquiring religious cases though they were not formally vested with this power by any State authority.

In order to eradicate the evils of *Mangba* the Registration Member of the State Darbar also suggested the following points for submission to the President (M S D) on 21st June 1938.[13]

1. Any Manipuri Hindu being repentant for any religious wrong he had committed may approach the *Brahma Sabha* direct for *Prayaschit* (atonement).
2. Any Manipuri Hindu may approach the *Brahma Sabha* for seeking advice concerning religious affairs or ceremonies relating to himself or his relatives or friends.
3. All complaints against a Manipuri Hindu for any commission of religious wrong must be lodged to the Judicial Darbar not to the *Brahma Sabha*. The Darbar shall make due enquiries and hear parties to ascertain if the alleged fact is true. If the fact were true the case will be forwarded to the *Brahma Sabha* for final disposal according to the *Shastras*.
4. During the pending of the case the Darbar shall pass an Injunction Order forbidding the person against whom a complaint is made to mix with others and a notice to that effect should be circulated. This will not complicate others who mix with the person before the complaint is made.
5. No Manipuri Hindu may be made *Mangba* except by a written certificate of *Mangba* (excommunication).
6. The certificate of excommunication must give full name of the person made *Mangba*, must set forth as exactly as possible all the facts which are the reasons why he is made *Mangba* with the authority of the *Shastras* for making him such and must be signed by at least seven members of the *Brahma Sabha*.

7 The certificate of excommunication shall be issued only in the cases when there are no *Prayaschit* or in the cases when the person who commits the religious wrong refuses to do *Prayaschit*

8 A certificate of excommunication may be cancelled at any time by His Highness the Maharaja on the recommendation of the Hindu Members of the Darbar when they think that the religious doctrines for making a person *Mangba* are not properly applied

9 A minimum *Prayaschit Money* is to be fixed by a joint deliberation of His Highness the Maharaja the Darbar and the *Brahma Sabha*

10 As there are various books of religious rules giving different views a particular book is to be selected for reference in religious cases by a joint sitting of His Highness the Maharaja the Darbar and the *Brahma Sabha*

11 As usual appeal against the order of the Darbar will be to His Highness the Maharaja

The Foreigners Member of the Manipur State Darbar had also offered his suggestions more or less in the same strain like his Darbar colleagues [14]

1 Before the certificate of excommunication is issued an Injunction Order will be issued to the effect that until the case is finally disposed of the person in question should not mix with others

2 No Manipuri Hindu will be made *Mangba* without a certificate of excommunication issued by order of His Highness the Maharaja

3 The *Brahma Sabha* will prescribe the *Prayaschitta* if any enjoined by the Hindu *Shastras* on performance of which the person declared *Mangba* becomes *Sengba* He will obtain the permission of His Highness the Maharaja to perform the penance

4 If a person commits a religious offence for which the *Shastras* do not prescribe any *Prayaschitta* he may be made *Mangba* permanently

5 Notwithstanding anything contained in the above paras His Highness the Maharaja can cancel a certificate of excommunication at any time

6 The certificate of excommunication will contain the full particulars of the religious offence committed by the person and will be signed by at least seven members of the *Brahma Sabha*

If any person spreads news before the certificate of excommunication is issued that a certain person is *Mangba* or suggested to be *Mangba* he may be sentenced to imprisonment which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to Rs 2 000 or with both

8 If a man on whom a certificate of excommunication has been served joins or tries to join either openly or secretly in a religious performance or festival and thereby endangers the sanctity of others he shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to 2 years or with fine which may extend to Rs 1 000 or with both and in addition pay compensation to the aggrieved party

9 If a person on whom an Injunction Order has been served contravenes that order he may be punished with imprisonment which may extend to 2 years or with fine which

may extend to Rs 1,000 or with both and in addition, pay compensation to the aggrieved party

10 All offences under these rules shall be triable by the Darbar under the appropriate Section of the *Indian Penal Code*

11 Appeals from the order of the Darbar shall lie as in the case of ordinary civil and criminal appeals to His Highness the Maharaja

The Forest Member of the Darbar also submitted his opinion on the *Mangba-Sengba* case to the President on the same date, i e , 21st June 1938 with the following remarks [15]

1 "Only His Highness the Maharaja in the *Brahma Sabha* can declare a man *Mangba* prescribe the doctrine of *Sengba* and thus declare a man *Sengba*

2 A man cannot be called or rumoured *Mangba* before a certificate of *Mangba* is given The certificate shall contain full name of the person substance of the cause of *Mangba* and must be signed by at least the minimum number of the *Ratnas* which forms the quorum according to the Hindu *Shastras*

3 One copy of the *Parwana* shall be given to the person who has been declared *Mangba* one copy to the village elders of the village of the *Amangba* and another copy shall be posted up in a conspicuous place of the locality where the *Amangba* lives

4 If any person is rumoured or called *Mangba* before this certificate has actually been issued or before issuing any temporary Injunction Order by the proper authority person who will be proved to be the cause of such rumour or suspicion shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to Rs 1 000 or with both

5 The man who has been declared *Mangba* by the competent authority must abstain from any religious ceremony unless he is invited by a person who is well acquainted with his *Mangba* and must inform the man who without knowing him to be *Mangba* invites him to join his religious ceremony or *Utsob* In default he shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to 2 years or with a fine which may extend to Rs 1,000 or with both

6 As soon as the complaint of *Mangba* against somebody is received by the Secular Court, an Injunction Order' must be issued against the person accused of not to join any religious ceremony until the case is decided The enquiry must be made as soon as possible

7 The *Brahma Sabha* must understand that all are equal in the eyes of law Especially the Hindu Law is accepted as enacted by God So there is no human being in the Hindu world that is supposed to be above the Law So they must act strictly according to the Hindu Law

8 "What is *Mangba* to one man must be *Mangba* to all If more persons than one are declared *Mangba* for the same offence and one or two out of them were made *Sengba* and others are not allowed the privilege though they offer to undergo the same condition as was imposed upon the former, he or they may submit the case to His Highness the Maharaja with a recommendation to cancel the certificate under this order "

After the Darbar Members and the *Brahma Sabha* expressed their views, the matter was considered on 22nd June 1938, but before any detailed rules were recommended, the Darbar unanimously approved the following broad principles

1. There must be some authoritative procedure by which an authoritative decision can be given as to the *Mangba* or *Sengba* condition of any person

2. A person may be *Mangba* permanently or he may be kept in a state in which he is not to be mixed with either pending inquiry or until some act of penance has been performed but whether he is *Mangba* permanently or kept in a state in which he is not to be mixed with temporarily there must be a formal written authoritative public order making him so and defining the state which he is in and the reason therefore

3. The degree to which the authoritative procedure has been followed must be considered in defamation cases where the good faith of any statement or suggestion that a person is *Mangba* or should not be mixed with is in question

4. Before a person is made finally *Mangba* he is entitled to have the facts inquired into a judicial manner by a Judicial Court

5. Inquiries should not be unreasonably prolonged and the issue of orders should not be unreasonably postponed

The above proceedings of the Darbar were approved by His Highness the Maharaja except Item [4] above The Maharaja suggested that if the person alleged to be *Mangba* did not confess the facts before the *Brahma Sabha* he would be directed to have recourse to the Judicial Court for the establishment of the facts and the Court concerned had to forward the findings to the *Brahma Sabha* for final orders His Highness the Maharaja wanted to know whether the person involved should not be kept in a state in which he was not to be mixed with temporarily pending the enquiry, *and if so who was to give such an Injunction Order*

In the closing days of the year 1938 the *Mangba-Sengba* scandal became more injurious to the general feelings of the public Any subject, who did not share interest and express loyalty to the British officers and particularly to the Maharaja, had their names included in the black list of the persons who were declared *Mangba* Under instructions from the Maharaja, the *Brahma Sabha* had always maintained a list of the names of excommunicated persons from the society The list was put up in the first instance, for the Maharaja's approval of an Injunction Order On 1st May 1939, the *Brahma Sabha* submitted a complete list of the names who were declared *Mangba*, and in it, Hijam Irabot was marked an excommunicated person for the following

"Ganak-ki Alaida Chaduna Guru Abagya Touba Miga Sansarga Toubagi Damak."

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER SIX

The Most Loyal and Absentee Maharaja of Manipur

1 *Maharaja's Civil List* It included items like His Highness's Privy Purse maintenance of the Maharaja's family and temples allowance to the detenus at Brindaban pay of the Maharani's companion the Maharaja's contingencies pujas ceremonies *Sradhs* of the Maharaja's near relatives miscellaneous educational expenses of the Maharaja's sons any unforeseen expenses on account of the State visit by the British officers

The main items in the *Maharaja's Civil List* were sanctioned in letter No 466C of 1 October 1914 from the Chief Secretary to the Political Agent of Manipur The scale of grants for extra ordinary Pujas and Ceremonies was sanctioned in Secret D O letter No 661W of 1 June 1917 to the Political Agent The expenditure on pujas ceremonies and the temples was purely in the personal control of the Maharaja But the allotment for *Sradhs* was not spent unless death occurred

Maharaja Chura Chand had a private temple called Gopalji Temple at Radhakund (U P) Although allowances to temples were included in the *Raja's Civil List* it was not proper to spend public money on a private temple In the Govindji's Temple the God was fed twice daily with large quantities of rice and there were other expenses on account of *Kirtans* etc All the rice needed came from the land settled with the deities and it was rather difficult to believe that the other expenses could amount to as much as Rs 10 000 a year

Sources of income for His Highness the Maharaja not shown in the budget (a) Revenue free land By letter No 30J dated 23rd April 1907 from the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam 200 (two hundred) *paris* (1 *pari* 2 acres) of revenue free land were sanctioned for the maintenance of the Maharaja and the members of his family However the State records had shown that the Maharaja held not less than 244 *Paris* of land revenue free on this account The Political Agent at last discovered a further 55 *Paris* of land revenue free held by the Maharaja without paying any revenue and he found that it was recorded as *State Khas land*

The standard annual rental paid by the tenants to landlords in Manipur was 12 *pots* (1 *pot* 1 *maunds*) of paddy for each *pari* As much of the Maharaja's land was cultivated by his servants and not by tenants he got far more than this At the lowest estimate his revenue free land of 200 *paris* had supplied the Maharaja with 3 600 maunds of paddy a year (b) Land settled with deities revenue free About 180 *Paris* of this type of tenure were found under the private possession of the Maharaja Some of this land was settled with the *Sebaits* but the Maharaja enjoyed much of the produce (c) Simul trees All the Simul trees in the Manipur valley were the personal property of the Maharaja who gave the right to collect the silk cotton to anyone he chose It was doubtful what return he got from it The collectors were generally a great nuisance to the common people who strongly demanded that the Maharaja should give up his claim to personal property (d) Fisheries Maharaja Chura Chand had two large fisheries although the annual value was estimated to be not more than Rs 200 to Rs 300 (e) A few fruit gardens were maintained for the Maharaja by the

hill men on small hills in the valley These hill men were excused from all other work of the State and they were given free House Tax The annual value was of course not much

2 C W L Harvey PMSD, *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1930-1931, printed at the State Printing Press, Imphal October, 1931 p 4

3 C S Mullan, M A , PMSD, *Administration Report of Manipur State* for the year 1921-1922 Imphal printed at the State Printing Press, 1922, p 11

4 See *The Resolutions of Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha* Imphal, I Session 30th May, 1934, Chudachand Printing Works, Imphal, pp 1-7

5 See English Translation Copy of the Resolutions of the 2nd Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha held at Tarapur, Silchar on the 7th *Fairen* 1147 *Manipurabda* (30th January 1936) Typescript

6 See Resolutions of the 3rd Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha Mandalay (Burma), 1st March 1937 1148 *Manipurabda*, *Fairen* 18 19 and 20

7 See letter from Mr I O Clarke Esq , I C S , Political Agent Manipur to A W Botham, dated 6th January 1921 On the 2 1 January 1921, the *Brahma Sabha* held a meeting to consider what was to be done about the women attending the bazar I had asked the Senapati to see that they did not do anything foolish and he and the members of the Darbar attended the meeting There were 500/600 present and they passed resolutions in the name of the Manipuri subjects saying that the women should be outcasted and that their presence now in the bazar was an insult to the Maharaja as they did not go there before when ordered by him The Senapati then said that there was no insult to the Maharaja and that the women should go and sit in whatever market they like until the Maharaja returned from Delhi when, he in consultation with the Political Agent would settle the question

8 E F Lydall, I C S , PMSD, *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1939 1940 Imphal printed at the State Printing Press, 1943, p 3

9 See Memo No 2890-95 G/ dated Imphal 4th April 1938, from A R H MacDonald, PMSD to the Members of the Manipur State Darbar to His Highness the Maharaja and to the *Brahma Sabha*

10 See Memo from A R H MacDonald, PMSD, dated Imphal the 8th June 1938 to the Members of the Manipur State Darbar

11 See Memo No 3559 G/dated Imphal, the 10th June 1938 from A R H MacDonald, PMSD, to the *Brahma Sabha*, Manipur

12 See Memo No 1140 dated 20th June 1938 from Priyobrata Singh to PMSD

13 See Memo No 754 R dated Imphal the 21st June 1938 from Registration Member (M S D) to PMSD

14 See Memo No 1685/11-4, dated Imphal, the 21st June 1938 from Foreigners' Member Manipur State Darbar to PMSD

15 See Memo No 1779 W F /1-4, dated Imphal, the 21st June 1938 from Forest Member (M S D) to the President (M S D)

CHAPTER SEVEN

(I)

Prelude to the Uprising of December 1939

[The First Political Demands of an Amangba (Innadriba for the present) who had free mixing with the Musalmans and Jat Tabas and who ate in the Gonok's Alai 12th April 1938 1st May 1939]

His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur was usually absent from the State and his absence had caused many important and urgent State matters to leave unattended and uncared for long periods In 1938 alone he was on tour in British India for a total number of 143 days visiting at places like Nabadwip Calcutta Brindaban Mathura Shillong and Silchar etc With an interval of four days only, the Maharaja had stayed four months at Nabadwip from October to March (1938 1939) and in his absence many of the important State policy matters were put in the hands of the Political Agent and the President of the Darbar who were all Europeans These people took less interest in favour of the local residents who on many occasions showed dissatisfaction with the Maharaja's rule and that of the British officers

The Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha took a different shape and the charter of their demands was totally altered after its fourth annual Session at the Chinga Hill *Maidan* on 30th December 1938 His Highness the Maharaja paid no further interest in the Mahasabha and he was not present in the Fourth Session and in his place Irabot was appointed President of the Mahasabha Irabot drafted most of the resolutions approved in the Fourth Session with the help of other Mahasabha members namely Lalit Madhab Chatterjee (Ex General Secretary) Chingakham Pishak Singh M A (General Secretary Mahasabha) Laishram Jogeswar Singh (Assistant General Secretary) and Banka Bihari Sharma (President Reception Committee) The resolutions were political in nature and they invariably reflected the people's long felt need of redressing many public grievance that they had suffered in the hands of the State officials both in religious and secular matters The following were some of the important resolutions which gave alarming signal to His Highness the Maharaja and the British officials [1]

1 This Mahasabha strongly condemns the repressive measures such as beating incarceration firing etc adopted towards the *Prajas* who carried on agitations for the fulfillment of their demands in the States of Hyderabad Mysore

Dhyankanol, Atgar, Rajkot, Kolhapur and the other native States in Orissa; and conveys its sympathy to all the bereaved members of the families of those heroes who sacrificed their lives in the struggle for freedom, and also prays to God for a peaceful rest of the souls of those heroes who thus sacrificed their lives

2 "This Mahasabha expresses its joy at the success and consolidation of the Congress coalition ministry in Assam and congratulates the Honourable Chief Minister Sjt. Gopinath Bordoloi on his success.

3. "This Mahasabha expresses its joy at the reforms being introduced in the two States of Mayurbhanj and Jodhpur for responsible Government.

4 "This Mahasabha has deleted the word 'Hindu' in the name of this organisation Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha that it may become an all-Manipuri Mahasabha

5 "This Mahasabha expresses its deep sense of sorrow at the incarceration of Rani Gaidinlieu of our Manipur hills who is still languishing in the Shillong Jail in the full bloom of her youth while all the political prisoners in Assam and many of them in the other provinces have already been released, and the India Government and local authorities be approached for her immediate release

6 "In order to remove the poverty of the Manipuri nation, to revive our cottage industry that has been lying in a decaying state for a long period of time, to improve our economic condition and to enable ourselves to control the market, an all-Manipuri *Khadi Sangha* be established by starting *Khadi Prathistans* in the villages of Manipur and by propagating *Khadir*.

7 "Not even one out of a hundred Manipuri people are literate. It will take many years before they will all become literate under the present conditions "Literacy Campaign" be launched among the illiterate adults that most of them may become literate within, at most, half of the period of time that will be required for the purpose at the present rate of progress.

8. "The Assam Government be moved to reserve seats in the Assam Council and Assembly for the Caste Hindu Manipuris in proportion to their population in Assam.

9. "The Manipur State comprises hills and valleys: the hills being eleven-twelfths and the valleys one-twelfth of the whole areas of the State If the hill areas are excluded, the valleys are not greater than a sub-division Moreover, the hill-men and we, the Meiteis have never been separated and cannot be separated in language, in culture and in commerce. The separation of the hills from the State is a great loss to the hill-men as well as to the Meiteis So this Mahasabha lodges its strong protest against the separation of the hills. The India Government be approached for keeping the hills under the State administration.

10. "This Mahasabha also demands the fulfillment of the claim of the Manipur State subjects for the establishment of Legislative Council for the attainment of the representative form of Government for which they have already submitted an application to His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur. Efforts be made by this Mahasabha for attaining this claim.

11 There are no sound and well established Sanskrit institutions worth the name for imparting education to the Manipuri Brahmins whose number is so large and who have to perform without commission of mistakes the functions of directing religious matters making recitals at worships and *Sradh* ceremony and the like There are in Manipur only three nominal Sanskrit institutions (*Tols*) [All the Sanskrit *Tols* were situated in Imphal The State maintained the three Sanskrit *Tols* with 6 Sanskrit *Pandits* One *Pandit* was a titleholder of the Calcutta Sanskrit Association] Here again there is no systematic teaching of theology and philosophy which subjects no Brahmin can afford to eschew except for a meagre portion of grammar and literature There is moreover no institution for higher degree Sanskrit classes State authorities be approached for establishing good Sanskrit institutions where the Manipuri Brahmins may be given good education in Sanskrit and also for taking steps whereby the aforesaid subjects may be taught by appointing competent Sanskrit teachers

12 Some Manipuri *Beisnabas* suffered much from the oppression of the *Brahma Sabha* by being declared *Mangba* without giving any reasonable ground As it serves a strong bar to the Manipuri *Beisnabas* progress and consequently to that of all the Manipuris so long as the personnel of the *Brahma Sabha* remains unchanged it is not desirable to have the present members of the body as guide in religious affairs The authority concerned be approached to form a new body to decide religious affairs by electing members from among Meiteis and Brahmins after dissolving the present body The Working Committee of the Mahasabha be entrusted with doing necessary redressing works in case the authority declines to do so by keeping the present personnel of the body the same

13 The State authorities be approached to permit the parties to appear in the Cherap and the Panchayet Courts with their shoes and not to kneel down on the floor when they give their statements and to abolish the practice of taking **Wakheisel**

14 Most of the Manipuris migrated to Tippera and Assam end their lives in clearing through poverty and the jungles for settlement His Highness the Maharaja and the State Darbar be approached for giving them means of their livelihood by giving them arable lands in the State

15 In the Calcutta Museum an ugly statue meant to represent a Manipuri is placed among those representing the hill tribes Formerly a photo of a male and a female representing the Hindu Manipuris was placed by the said statue So the said ugly statue was clearly distinguished to be the facsimile of a Manipuri of the hill tribe but not the Hindu Manipuri Now by the removal of the said photo all those visitors who are quite ignorant of the origin of the Hindu Manipuris are led to regard the statue as the specimen representation of a Hindu Manipuri The Superintendent of the Calcutta Museum be approached to make necessary redress

16 In the Calcutta Commercial Museum there are innumerable works of arts and crafts contributed by the various communities of India as marks of dexterity in this line But nothing of the sort from Manipur has yet been contributed This Mahasabha should make necessary arrangements to send some fine indigenous articles to the said Museum

17 "This Mahasabha conveys its thanks to His Highness the Maharaja of Tippera for His Highness's kindly exempting the Manipuris settling in Tippera State from paying their tuition fees in Schools in the State

18 "The authorities be approached to introduce the Manipuri language recognised by the Calcutta University in the schools where only the Manipuri boys read and also in those where Manipuri boys also read

19 'The special concession granted to the Manipuri pilgrims proceeding upto the Nabadwip-*Ghat* is due to this Mahasabha s efforts The Agent I I R be approached to grant similar concession to the Manipuri pilgrims proceeding to Brindaban

20 "The Political Agent and the Assam Government be approached to appoint competent Manipuris in higher grades in the Agency Court Manipur as no Manipuris have as yet been appointed in higher grades though there is no restriction from appointing them

21 'This Mahasabha condoles the death of some of the Manipuri Mahamadans who have long settled in Burmah in the recent riot between the Burmese and the Mahamadans

22 The State Darbar be approached for passing orders to make the State Courts and the other State offices use **"terms of civility"** in their summons and notices "[Sic]

The above resolutions of the Mahasabha were indeed very alarming to the State authorities, and when the General Secretary of the Mahasabha (Ch Pishak Singh, M A) submitted the copy of the resolutions to the Darbar on 8th February 1939 "for consideration and taking necessary action", the Darbar hurriedly issued the following notification (No 5) on 15th February

All State Servants and masters in State aided schools should be warned that the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha has become part of a political movement and therefore that they are not allowed to take part in it subscribe in aid of it or assist it in any way ***(Rule 20 of Government Servants' Conduct Rules, 1935)*** "

His Highness the Maharaja cut off all connections he had formerly with the Mahasabha and his severance was intimated to the General Secretary on 27th March 1939

(II)

Repressive Measures in Manipur and the Heated Altercation of the Two Presidents of the Mahasabha and the State Darbar

His Highness the Maharaja knew that the public gatherings in Manipur were the signals of political movements in the guise of religious and social functions He too believed that the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha was really a branch of the All India Congress, and if the movements were not checked there would come a time in very near future when the State officials would face great difficulties The Maharaja, therefore, requested

the President of the Darbar and the Political Agent to put a complete stop to all the movements, but without wounding the feelings of the Manipuri public

Many repressive measures were imposed and extended even to the refusal of entry to the visiting organizers of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee when they requested the Maharaja to enter Manipur to enlist some Congress recruits The Political Agent was given information by the Maharaja not to allow any foreign Congress organizers or any political agitator of any sort, to enter the Manipur State (See MSD Resolution No 1 of 22nd February 1939) Processions and public meetings were not allowed in the British Reserve unless previous permission had been obtained from the Political Agent This order, however, did not apply to the religious processions, which were allowed in the past, and 'the same' was circulated to all Government Departments, offices and schools, and also the general public

One Khomdram Dhana Chandra Singh, an Inspector of Police [who joined the State service on 29th July 1927] who was a humble servant of the Maharaja reportedly alleged that some prominent leaders (including Irabot) of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha had delivered speeches to large public gatherings highlighting mismanagement in the affairs of the State administration The dutiful Inspector was of opinion that "political agitation might develop to its culmination" if the Mahasabha assemblage were not suppressed He thus personally approached the Police Member of the Darbar and requested him to extend imposition of the Political Agent's standing order of 3rd March 1939 in the State jurisdiction also The President of the Darbar, however, expressed that an order forbidding the public meetings and assemblages was not necessary at the stage Political agitation certainly existed in Manipur, but such an order would be nothing to allay it and might, indeed, exasperate the feelings of the public The meetings held so far by leading members of the Mahasabha were perfectly peaceful and law abiding and the objects of them were not either criminal or seditious

Many of the demands forwarded (and urged to be fulfilled) by the Mahasabha on behalf of the people were flatly rejected and were left unattended without consideration by the State officials Applications that were submitted by the public either to the Maharaja or the President of the Darbar were first forwarded through the Mahasabha for necessary action In connection with an appointment of a Sub-Assistant Surgeon in the Imphal Civil Hospital, the Mahasabha forwarded an application

to the President of the Darbar claiming that first preference should be given to the Manipur State subjects whenever any vacancy or new creation of post arose in the State service [See Memo No.15 N.M.M. of 30th January 1939]. Again, on the first page, column 3 of the *Manipur Matam* (a local paper in Manipuri) there was an article under the caption *Chawkidarna Pao Chenba* in its issue of 12th April 1939, which was printed as follows:

কৈশামথোং চৌকিদারনা মহাসভা য়াওবা মীগা তিন্না লাক্লবা থোক্লবদি থানাদা তাকউ হাইনা কৈশামথোং লৈকাইদা পাও চেন্নৈ হাই।

[অহানবা চহি, ১১ শুবা মশিঙ, য়ুমশকৈশ, তাং ১২।৪।১৯৩৯ ইং, সম্পাদক-এন: কালা সিংহ]

The Working Committee of the Mahasabha regarded the action of the village *Chawkidar* as interfering with the civil liberties of the general public and as prejudicing the public mind against the Mahasabha. In this connection, Irabot demanded from the President of the Darbar to let him know if the State authorities had ever ordered or instructed the village *Chawkidars* of the State to act as was written in the above paper [See Memo No.53 N.M.M. of 20th April 1939]. Mr. MacDonald in his reply to Irabot said that he knew nothing about the sayings or doings of the Keisamthong *Chawkidar* or about the instructions, if there were any, which he received from the authorities; and *he did not propose to trouble himself by inquiring into such a trivial matter.* Mr. MacDonald also charged that Irabot had openly advocated the release of one of the most dangerous criminals that Manipur had ever produced (Gaidinlieu), and he openly praised the acts of the rioters in other States. On this count, Mr. MacDonald wrote, the Mahasabha had to come under Police Supervision [Rf. to Memo No.3911 G/1B-35 of 2nd May 1939].

In Manipur there was a kind of "Forced Labour" which was imposed on the poor villagers of the *Lawai* areas. When the Clerks and office staffs of the Land Revenue Department came to the *Lawai* villages for collection of taxes they were authorised to engage the villagers by turns for guarding the money collected from the villagers. At night also the villagers were put on duty to watch the money. This practice of "forced labour" was known as *Yairek Sentry* or *Mitseng Sentry*, and it was extremely detested by the poor villagers. In the beginning of 1939, the agitation against the practice of *Yairek Sentry* became a general outcry of the poor people and they demanded for a total abolition of this hateful practice once for all. Irabot, on behalf of the Kakching Committee of the Nikhil

Manipuri Mahasabha made the following appeals to the President of the Darbar to give effect to an abolition of the system, which brought many inconveniences to the village people

1. It was an extremely burdensome "forced duty" on the part of the poor *Lawai* people to give *Seba* and *Mitseng Sentry* for the State official staffs of Land and Revenue Department who came down to the *Lawai* villages for collection of land revenue tax, and in addition, to watching the money thus collected from the villagers, against thieves and other incidents,
2. It was not right to levy the fine called *Sentek* from those people who fell sick and who could not find themselves avoidable from a pre-occupied private business,
3. The amount of the revenue tax thus collected was to bring from the *Lawai* area, which covered a distance of 28 or above miles for deposit to Imphal, the transportation of which was very risky and irksome to the villagers No suitable arms were given to the village transporters, and in case the money had been snatched or stolen during the journey, matters would become serious,
4. For a deposit of the revenue tax at Imphal, the to and fro journey from the *Lawai* area to Imphal took more than 3-4 days the expenditure of meals had to be borne personally by the poor villagers and private business had to be sacrificed for the time lost in the journey,
5. It was not quite right to watch over the money which the people had just cleared as revenue tax due to them, and again to transport it for deposit at Imphal It was feared that, in addition to watching the money and transportation of the same, there might come burglars and felonious people who could easily put down the unarmed villagers and kill for the money's sake

It was, therefore, resolved to make an appeal to the State authorities for a total relinquishment of the most unwanted system of

- Giving *Seba* and *Mitseng Sentry* to the State officials who came to the *Lawai* for collection of land revenue tax,
- Levy of fine called *Sentek* for non-compliance of giving *Seba* and Sentry [Sic] Rf to Memo No 56 N M M of 24th April 1939

The President of the Darbar was also informed that on 17th February 1939, the Land Revenue Officer had levied a fine of Rs 3 from each of the four people who belonged to Kakching Khulen for non-compliance of giving *Seba* and *Sentry* The people were actually asked to pay fine on the very spot, and this action was beyond the official jurisdiction of the Land Revenue Officer The Mahasabha, therefore, considered that it was time to bring justice and to rectify "misdoings" of the State by the higher officials As a reply to the above appeal of the Mahasabha, Mr MacDonald himself wrote in original Manipuri on 8th May 1939

নিখিল মণিপুরী মহাসভা (ককচিং কম্মিটি)।

প্রজানা মাগী মাগী খাজনা মতম চানা শুনা থীববদি খাজনা থৌবা মুহবিসু কুম্ফম থোক্তে, প্রজানসু ছস্ত্রি চংফম থোক্তে, প্রজানসু নুঙাইগনি, ঐনসু নুঙাইগনি ।। প্রজানা খাজনা তোনবনিনা মুহবিনসু কুমইবনি ছস্ত্রিসু চংগদবনি ।।

[Correct the above, maintaining the sense and send as a reply – A R H MacDonald]

The Working Committee of the Mahasabha again forwarded copy of Resolution No 2 of a sitting on 27[th] April 1939 to the President of the Darbar for consideration and necessary action In the resolution it was mentioned that on the fourth page of the *Manipur Matam* (a local daily) of 22[nd] April 1939, there was a printed article on the possible reforms of the Manipur State as already discussed by the Members of the Darbar and approved of by the Maharaja of Manipur Now, Irabot, on behalf of the Mahasabha, strongly urged on the propriety of formation of an "Enquiry Committee" beforehand, and that, the Committee could be composed of deputations from *the Mahasabha on behalf of the general mass* The resolution further stated that the representatives of the State authority were to make enquiry on which lines reforms could be carried out to the entire satisfaction of the people [See Memo No 62, N M M dated 6[th] May 1939] Mr MacDonald however refuted the claim of the Mahasabha to represent **the general mass of Manipur.** He retorted against the idea saying that it seemed to him no better than the claim of the ivy to represent the trees of the forest He wrote back to Irabot [3]

Some of the comments of the Mahasabha on public affairs have been so rash ignorant prejudicial and malicious, that I do not think it would be proper to invite the Mahasabha or you to make any contribution to the scheme for State Reforms

Mr MacDonald hurriedly intimated the Judicial Member of the Darbar that he had instituted a case and complained against Hijam Irabot, President of the so-called Mahasabha and against Kunjabihari Singh, Editor of the *Manipur Paojen* for 'defamation' punishable under Section 500 of the *Indian Penal Code* (I P C), for the printing of the following article in the paper on 19[th] May 1939 [4]

A sitting of the Mahasabha Working Committee was held on 27[th] April 1939 at 6 30 p m at the residence of the President

Resolution No 1 The Mahasabha expresses its deep sense of sympathy for the Digboi labour union in their labour strike and takes a strong exception to firing on the unarmed labourers who resort to peaceful means only and appeals to the suffering labourers [The article was signed H Irabot Singh President Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha]

The facts as established by the magisterial inquiry of Pabitranath Das, were that, at Digboi on 18[th] April 1939, the Assam Rifles fired in self-defence on riotous mobs the rioters, armed with lathis and flinging bricks and stones had attacked the Assam Rifles and injured some of

them The Mahasabha's resolution openly suggested, on the contrary, that the Assam Rifles had fired on unarmed and inoffensive strikers that were to say that some of the Assam Rifles were guilty of brutally murdering peaceful citizens. This suggestion according to MacDonald was false and defamatory. Whether the suggestion was made and published by the prosecuted persons (Irabot and Kunjabihari), or whether those who made it had honestly believed it to be true and if they believed it whether their belief was supported by the kind of the evidence that unprejudiced and law abiding men would naturally require before accusing their fellow men of murder these were the questions for the Court to decide. Mr MacDonald wrote in his letter to the Judicial Member (MSD) [5]

> I have no personal concern with this affair from next July my interest in the fate of Manipur will probably be that of a mere spectator. I know too that any one in the Assam Rifles who heard that he had been dubbed a murderer by the so called Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha or in the *Manipur Paojen* would laugh as if he had heard a joke. ***But I cannot regard the matter as a joke***
>
> In all nations there have always been men appointed to the special duty of enforcing the law of protecting the lives and property of peaceful persons and of punishing evil doers. As a safeguard against abuse of their powers it is right that the acts of these men should be subject to just and reasonable criticism. But there is another sort of criticism unjust and unreasonable whose weapons are lies and whose arsenal is malice that sort of criticism is not a safeguard against anything it is hideously wicked in itself and it is a direct attack on the foundation of society.
>
> I am not one of those who believe that the so called Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha is composed entirely of selfish men seeking only their advancement. I believe it contains some who are sincerely seeking the welfare of this State. Sincerity always gives power but it does not always give wisdom and power may be power for good or power for harm. The history of India and Burma in the last 20 years has proved how tragically easy it is to persuade sincere patriots that the national cause can be served by applauding the guilty and slandering the innocent and the convulsion of hatred and violence that sprang from that persuasion has brought those countries to the places where they stand now on the brink of the abyss. If India and Burma are to be saved and ***if Manipur is to be stopped from going down the same road to destruction it can only be by the work of other patriots equally sincere who have learnt a very different and a much harder lesson that it is not enough to cry for justice it is necessary also to be just.***
>
> It is as a small contribution towards the teaching of that lesson that I have instituted this case.

Mr MacDonald's institution of the case against the President of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and also the Editor of the *Manipur Paojen* under Section 500 of The *Indian Penal Code* was entered as a Darbar Criminal Case No 28 of 1939 and the 3rd June of the year was fixed for trial.

Irabot referred back to Memo No 4242 of 5th June 1939 from the President of the Darbar saying that he could not follow on what grounds

the President had passed his 'Opinion' on the claims of the Mahasabha to be the 'representative' of the general mass of Manipur Irabot explained the meaning of the word **Representative** in his letter to the President under the following

The Mahasabha is the representative of the general mass of Manipur State and the Manipuris of Assam Tippera and Burma It was formed in the year 1934 under the Presidentship of His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur All the high officials of Manipur State joined in the Mahasabha and they remained as members for about four years The annual meetings are being held in different places by turn in Manipur, Cachar and Burma

'A resolution of the Darbar (No 5 of 15 February 1939) separated the State servants from the Mahasabha, declaring that the Mahasabha is a political association

As this Mahasabha is the only political organisation that can claim to be the representative of the general mass of the Manipur State it has every right to make any contribution concerning the schemes for State reforms I beg to know what comments of the Mahasabha on public affairs have been regarded as rash ignorant prejudiced and malicious so that I can explain to you that every comment are never meant to be so

'I hope you will kindly allow the Mahasabha to make a contribution to the schemes for reforms in the State'

According to Mr MacDonald, the Mahasabha's resolutions on Gaidinlieu and on the Digboi firing were rash, ignorant, prejudicial and malicious From the concluding part of the resolutions he could draw the "degree of ignorance" which they had displayed, *an ignorance so inexcusable that it must have been deliberate* MacDonald wrote back to Irabot [8]

'When I speak of the Mahasabha's claim to represent the masses of Manipur I am not speaking of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha, which has ceased to exist, I am speaking of the present Mahasabha, which is a body of persons agitating for democracy Whether any form of democracy is suitable or unsuitable for the modern Manipur is a matter for controversy, but there can be no controversy that *the idea of democracy is new and foreign in Manipur newer than Japanese cloth and more foreign than Southern Indian tobacco* A body which stands rightly or wrongly for a new and foreign idea cannot reasonably claim to represent the masses "

In the middle of June 1939, the Secretary of the Mahasabha (N Thanin Singh) forwarded some resolutions passed in the sittings of the Mahasabha's Branch Committees The resolutions made special mention on the proposed deputation of Mahasabha members whose contributions towards the schemes for State reforms were urgently solicited Mr MacDonald had returned all the 16 pages of the Branch Committee resolutions, which the Secretary sent to him 'for necessary actions' He had not read most of them, because he said, *he did not regard the Secretary, the President of the Mahasabha or the Branch Committees of the*

Mahasabha as "proper intermediaries" between him and the public MacDonald wrote to the Secretary [9]

"I do not ordinarily require any intermediaries in my dealings with the public, and I fear that it would have a most undesirable effect on my relationship with the public if I gave cause for people to think that requests made through, or by political cliques are likely to receive special favour"

In spite of the repeated appeals made through the Mahasabha by the Manipuri public for redressing the burden of many social evil practices, the Maharaja and his Darbar were not in a hurry to give a serious consideration over the matter This great denial on the part of the State authorities added incremental grievances and public distress, which were brought to its culmination in the 'uprising of December 1939' The Kakching Committee of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha had earlier demanded the abolition of *Yairek Sentry, Seba* and Conveyance the services rendered by the villagers gratis for the Land Revenue officials [See Memo No 56 N M M of 24th April 1939] As stated before, the Land Revenue Collectors used to compel the poor villagers to guard in the night-time the revenue they collected and the villagers had to accompany again the peons of the Land Revenue Office while going to Imphal to deposit the revenue at the office The Mahasabha demanded that this practice should be REMOVED as it was done at the risk of the villagers' lives, or if co-operation of the subjects was sought for, proper arms could be supplied for self protection and reasonable remuneration should be given Irabot sincerely requested Mr MacDonald (addressed as *Benevolent President*) to remove this evil practice at least for the Manipuri people before his (MacDonald) final departure from the State [See Memo No 89 N M M dated Imphal the 17th June 1939] But MacDonald argued that if the revenue were always punctually paid as it ought to be, there would be no necessity for the Collection *Muhorirs* to visit the villages, and no necessity for the villagers to guard or to escort the money collected by such *Muhorirs* At the same time, about three quarters of the land revenue collection staff could be gradually absorbed into vacancies in other Departments, thereby releasing nearly Rs 15,000 a year to be spent for the public benefit MacDonald wrote back to Irabot [10]

"I hope that you and all others who call themselves patriots, will co-operate in removing the grievance which you describe by using your influence to persuade people to discharge the simplest of all their duties to their country *the duty of punctually paying their taxes*

There were some judicial procedures adopted in the Lower Courts of Manipur,[11] which seemed to vitally affect the *Indian Penal Code*, and by the result of which the general public of Manipur had suffered to a great extent The Mahasabha in this context, made request to Mr MacDonald to receive a deputation consisting of the Working Committee members, *viz* , H Irabot Singh, Kh Magha Singh and N Thanin Singh, to discuss with him for a general solution to the problems It was nonetheless surprising to note why Irabot who was himself once a Member of the Sadar Panchayet Court[12] and the other members of the Mahasabha Working Committee could not understand that all the State Courts (except the Hill Courts) were put under the supervision of the Judicial Member of the Darbar (Nongmaithem Shyamacharan Singh, *Selungba*, Ordinary Member of the State Darbar, in-charge, Judicial Department) It was, therefore, that MacDonald flatly denied receiving the deputation of the Working Committee members, and this certainly brought discredit to the Mahasabha [13]

Irabot persistently argued as regards remuneration payable to the villagers for rendering *Seba, Sentry* and *Mitseng Sentry* to the land revenue collectors, that no State officers from the highest to the lowest were employed without giving any remuneration In no State established by law and order, was any subject employed without giving remuneration at the loss of his personal interest, if of course, the State was not in a dangerous situation from some disastrous natural phenomenon or foreign invasion Even in such cases, instead of imposing "forced labour" the subjects were made convinced of their own situation and they were employed as 'volunteers' But Manipur was not found in such a situation and this was well known to the Mahasabha Therefore, the Mahasabha could not find any logic in the argument that because some villagers had failed to pay the revenue in time, therefore all the villagers should work for the State gratis even at the risk of their life If the State authorities sought after the co-operation of the unemployed subjects in the work of the State Government, the authority should also co-operate with those by way of giving remuneration to them

Like other States in India, if a government servant of the Manipur State had some private piece of business, such as the observance of some religious ceremony or was bed-ridden, he used to get 'casual leave' or 'privilege leave' with full pay But, if the poor villagers from some unavoidable business or illness had failed to render the service of guarding the revenues collected from the *Lawai* areas (*Mitseng Sentry*) at late night or to escort the *Muhorirs* upto Imphal, each of the villagers had to pay 4

annas to the village *Chawkidar* as *Sentek* (a kind of fine) If the villager, through poverty had failed to pay this *Sentek* of 4 annas, the Land Revenue Officer on the report of the *Chawkidar*, used to impose on the villager a fine of Rs 3 for disobedience of orders Referring to this illegal practice of levying *Sentek* and of *Mitseng Sentry* from the villagers Irabot emphatically pointed out to Mr MacDonald [14]

"THIS MAHASABHA DOES NOT SEE ANY JUSTICE OR REASON IN DOING SO "

Mr A R H MacDonald Esq , I C S , was in charge of the President, Manipur State Darbar upto 1st August 1939, and on the day Mr T A Sharpe Esq , I C S took over the charge Before he left Manipur, MacDonald hurriedly reviewed the financial condition of the State and the implications made therein with the people especially the poor villagers who were the taxpayers to the State Government In his last letter addressed to Irabot MacDonald said something of a little higher plane of social and political thought , which had never occurred in the minds of the other Mahasabha members While regretting that he had no time to correspond further with Irabot on the subject matter of 'political and social grievances felt by the people of Manipur, MacDonald tried to expose his own statement of facts' in writing to Irabot on the last day of his service in Manipur [15]

You (Irabot) seem to be suffering from a hallucination deplorably common among irresponsible critics of administrative policy You imagine that there are two separate bodies one called 'the State and the other called the Public that the State can be rich while the public is poor and that by suitable begging cadgering or bullying the rich State can be made to give money and other forms of help to the poor public

These things are not so the State s money and the public s money are the same thing if the public is poor the State is automatically poor too if the State s expenditure is increased the public s expenditure that is taxation must automatically be increased to meet it

Your proposal that the guards and the escorts provided for money collected from tax defaulters should be paid for by the State is nothing but a proposal that the whole public defaulting and non defaulting villages alike should pay for the special measures necessary to collect revenue from defaulting villages I DO NOT ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL "

Although MacDonald was not present in the last week of August 1939 Irabot sent in another letter wherein he wrote that the President of the Darbar was simply misled on the subject Because the Maharaja of Manipur had already announced by a notification of 9th June 1913 that the system of forced labour from the State subjects would be stopped [16] And in lieu of it the people were burdened with some extra taxation newly imposed on lands, i e *Pothang Pats* (free-fisheries) and *grass mahals*

etc The Manipur State Darbar again issued another Notice (No 52) on 24th November 1931 as follows

"ষ্টেটকী থবক তৌবা মীশিংনা ষ্টেটকী থবক হাযবদি সমন, তদন্ত, মী ফাবা, খাজনা থৌবা চৎপা মতমদা মখোযগী পোত্থাং পুবা অমসুং সেবা তৌবা অসি পুমতোক তোক্লগনি; অদুগা লৌ ইংখোলগী খাজনা থৌবা চৎপা কাংবুশিংদা মখোয়না পিখৎলিবা শেল অদুগী সন্ত্রি পিবা অসিদি মমাংঙৈগী মতৌগুম্না হৌজিক অসিদি তৌখিগনি। মসিসু তোক্লবগীদমক হৌজিক খয়বি।"

তাং ২৪।১১।১৯৩৯ ইং

The above notice was issued on the strength of the Darbar Resolution No 1A of 28th October 1931[1], which stated that the Darbar was already contemplating total abolition of *Mitsing Sentry*, i e , guarding of the revenue collected But it was a matter of great pity, Irabot had charged, that the very Darbar could not keep alive to their plighted words and did nothing to materialize the resolution upto the last days of the year 1939 The general publics were very keen and took the matter seriously Redress was long overdue The President and the Members of the Darbar were therefore requested to look into the above two 'Notification' and Resolution , and to abolish either the practice or to allow remuneration for the labour [18]

Great efforts were made by the Mahasabha to bring changes from the previous evil practices (of both social and religious) which were formerly advocated by His Highness the Maharaja and the numerous State officials Among the various reforms that the Mahasabha had tried to give effect to were against the *Brahma Sabha* activities of the *Mangba-Sengba* scandal, the much hated "forced labour" and *Yairek Sentry*, the practice of taking *Wakheisel* and other important judicial matters' then prevalent in the Manipur State Law Courts

By the middle of July 1939 the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha firmly resolved that if His Highness the Maharaja could not implement Resolution No 12 of the Mahasabha of the 4th open session (30th December 1938) within July 15, 1939 necessary action would be taken up with a view to implementing the said resolution The *Brahma Sabha*, in the meantime, had disposed of a case curious by nature and unheard of before The fact was that, the *Brahma Sabha* had in its first decision decided in favour of declaring one woman whose identity was known to be of Brahmin origin, to have become a *Kshetrani* For this judgement, the signatories in the order of the *Brahma Sabha* were excommunicated and latterly made *Sudhi* (purification) The penalty as sequel to the above decision of the *Brahma Sabha* was so great that even when death had occurred of the *Benasthakari* (Religious

Counselor), who was one of the signatories, no due performance was solemnized But quite contrary to the above, the very *Brahma Sabha* who had penalized some of their members for their decision reversed their opinion and finally upheld the first decision already arrived at and thus declared the woman in question to be a *Ksherani* This arbitrary action of the *Brahma Sabha* was found unbearable by the Mahasabha

The members of the *Brahma Sabha* were sometimes either penalized with fines or pardoned by the Manipur State Darbar for their misuse of powers in dealing with many religious questions It was conclusively proved that the *Brahma Sabha* was **incompetent** and **highly corrupted** and **partial** in their dealings with religious matters Thus the Mahasabha declared itself to have ceased to remain under the control of the *Brahma Sabha* in matters concerning religion and in accordance with Resolution No 12 of the 4th plenary session of the Mahasabha, arrangements were immediately made to form a *Dharma Bebasthapok Sabha* (Religious Council) after the liking of the general public Questions regarding any sanction in respect of religion were to be put up to *Gauradharma Pracharini Sabha* which was a branch of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha without paying any fees [19]

There were many people who were against the abolition of the "forced labour" and *Mitseng Sentry* especially the State officials of the Land Revenue Department stood tooth and nail, and they were ever ready to oppose any move against the system They wanted to retain the system for a means of extortion of the ultimate energy and labour from the illiterate villagers It was against these unbearable and the most abusive practice of the system that the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha had to urge the State authorities to abolish it or to allow 'suitable remuneration for the labour

Unpaid labour was impressed for the upkeep of roads and for the carriage of luggage of His Highness the Maharaja, members of the royal family and State officials when on tour Supplies were also levied from the villagers and this system was much abused by certain members of the royal family and the petty officials It was obligatory on the villagers of any locality to build temporary grass-huts for the accommodation of His Highness the Maharaja in the course of his tours, should he be prevented by caste or other considerations from seeking shelter in the houses of the villagers themselves

The State *Muhorirs* of the Land Revenue Department used to go out and to collect the land revenue in their respective Circles So they said, they required men to take out the office records and other articles

from Imphal to the village, and from one village to another when their collection only required them to shift their camps No land revenue came up to the State until the *Muhorirs* went to the moffusil and sent out Peons to the villages The *Muhorirs* in calling the villagers acted legally and in conformity with the orders contained in the Maharaja s proclamation of 9th June 1913, villagers either from the hills or from the plains alike were called in to take the luggage by all officers while going out on tour

The only other British officer who strongly objected to the payment of remuneration to the villagers for the *Yairek Sentry* was Mr B C Gasper Esq who was Assistant to the President of the Manipur State Darbar in the hills When the villagers of the Yairipok area Ningthoukhong Lairensajik Ngangkha Lawai Thamnapokpi and others in Moirang had started agitation against the *Pothang* and *Yairek Sentry* Mr Gasper strongly opposed to the idea that the villagers should be paid for guarding the money collected by the land revenue staff out in the villages He said that the system was in force for a very long period and if payments were to be made for the *Yairek Sentry* duty the cost to the State considering that there were 5 *Lakpas* and 32 *Muhorirs* (possibly 35 taking 3 extra men) would work out at something like Rs 14,000 a year, and moreover, he said, *there was no general dislike of the Yairek Sentry duty in itself*" According to him, what certain villages had objected to were

1 Unequal distribution of labour within the villages themselves

2 Unequal distribution of labour as between adjoining villages

3 The objection of certain villages to carrying boots, sandal etc belonging to members of the Land Revenue official staff [The remedy was for the owners to tie these up inside the bundles so that they could not be seen]

4 When members of the Land Revenue staff had failed to pay for articles bought by them or failed to pay the proper price

Mr Gasper put up his argument to the Judicial Member of the Darbar saying that no attempt should be made to change the system of the *Yairek Sentry* duty by which collections were made out in the district [70]

The State *Kanungos* and *Amins* of the Land Revenue Department strongly urged that according to the nature of their duty they were always to go out on tour at far villages from Imphal Formerly during the time of tour they used to call the villagers and engaged them to carry office records and instruments etc on fare The *Amins* had to work in the field from 8 a m to 6 p m , and when they were in the field the villagers used to guard the office records There was great difference between the other State servants and the field staff of the Land Revenue Department For, most of the season in the year the field staff were on tour and they could not carry

out their duty without the help of the villagers Because all the instruments required in the field and the office records needed at least 3 or 4 persons to carry them for each *Amin* They could not execute the work without the help of the villagers when they were transferred from one place to another And when the *Amins* were in the field they had to leave all the office records and *Dag* fees in the hands of the villagers Great possibilities were there that the State properties could be burnt or stolen away by the miscreants of any local area The *Amins* got only Rs 10 to 20 per month as their salary and they could not defray any extra cost with the villagers when demanded money from them Under the Darbar Resolution No 1A of 28th October 1931 the villagers did no longer give lodging gratis to the State *Amins* when they stayed there They further argued that if the system had to be put to an end, it would mean complete stoppage of the tours undertaken by the revenue field staff, case enquiries, survey and settlement works, collection of land revenue and its transmission to Imphal However, most of the villagers in the *Lawai* areas of Manipur had refused to carry out the works of this "hateful system"

Other important reformations that the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha had tried to introduce were in the matters of Judicial 'mismanagement' then prevalent in Manipur There was a practice in the State Courts of Manipur, that the parties were seldom heard in the appeal cases unlike the practice of hearing through counsels at least in other places, with the result that justice was suffered for want of proper clarification of facts which could only be had by a thorough examination of the parties by the Court and between themselves The Mahasabha, therefore, asked the Darbar to make arrangement so that the parties could be heard in appeal cases Shyamacharan Singh, who was Judicial Member of the Darbar, was however of opinion that it was impossible to summon the parties in every appeal cases But in certain cases, when the lower Courts in Manipur did not take complete statements, the Darbar used to summon the parties *This rule was still in force in the Judicial Darbar and the Member thought it to be very good*

Litigants in both the Cherap and the Sadar Panchayet Courts had to suffer before being called in for 5 to 6 hours from the hot sun and rain as there was no shed for shelter The Mahasabha demanded the erection of a shed for the litigants of the above two Courts

In the Judicial Member's office criminal appeals and civil appeals were allowed to take its own course in matters of precedence according to the date of filing the appeals The practice seemed to be uncommon because

criminal appeals required prompt action while the civil appeals might not require such action Therefore every appellant in criminal appeal had to file another separate petition for causing a prompt action on the appeal It meant that every appellant had to pay an extra unnecessary fees of 8 annas in the case of an appellant who could himself write the petition and Re 1 in the case of an illiterate one So the Mahasabha made an urgent appeal to the Judicial Member to see that criminal appeals requiring prompt action might be dealt with immediately after they were preferred The Judicial Member accepted this demand and he made arrangements to dispose off criminal cases first He informed the matter and the Darbar had also agreed [21]

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER SEVEN

The First Political Demands of an Amangba (Tinnadriba for the Present)

1 Rf to **Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha,** 4[t] Session held at Imphal Manipur State on the 30[th] December 1938 Sig Irabot Singh President Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha (Typescript)

2 **Wakheisel** There was a practice of taking *Wakheisel* in the lower courts of the State ie the Cherap Court and the Sadar Panchayet Court By this practice every winner of any case whether civil or criminal was bound to pay a penalty of Re 1 called *Wakheisel* and it was divided among the staff of the Court However this practice did not look unreasonable before the introduction of Court Fees But after the imposition of the fees in the State Courts the extra fee of *Wakheisel* was considered quite unreasonable and the general public were very much aggrieved of paying the unnecessary fees over and above the Court Fees After having received reports from the Cherap and the Sadar Panchayet Courts in February 1940 the Manipur State Darbar had resolved that *Wakheisel* was an unfair burden on the Manipuri public and it should be abolished His Highness the Maharaja showed no objection to the *Wakheisel* being abolished and in its place the Darbar had granted increments to the Members as compensation [See MSD resolution No 2 of 7[t] February 1940]

2(a) ***Rani Gaidinlieu*** Rf to Resolution No 5 of the 4[t] Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha 30[t] December 1938

At the commencement of the year 1931 there was a Kabui disturbance in Manipur headed by a man called Jadonang who declared himself to be the chosen Kabui leader who would overthrow the British administration and to eventually set up a Kabui Raj He was arrested by the Cachar authorities and taken over by the Political Agent of Manipur on 8 March 1931 Jadonang was wanted not only as the

leader of the new movement but also as a "murderer" Criminal investigations showed that Jadonang and some others of his village were wholly responsible for the brutal murder, in 1929, of four unarmed Manipuris who were journeying towards Cachar Jadonang was convicted and sentenced to be hanged, the sentence being carried out in August 1931

The person, who was responsible for the continuation of the Jadonang cult, was a Kabui girl by the name of Gaidinlieu She was indeed one of the more important of the troublemakers The Kabuis and the Kacha Nagas of Manipur were told that if they followed the new cult a *Naga Raj* would be created, which would rule over all the tribes in the hills Gaidinlieu's subsequent appearance as a leader brought serious troubles in parts of the North Cachar Hills, the plains of Cachar and the Naga Hills of Manipur In October 1932 Gaidinlieu was captured at Kenoma in the Naga Hills and she was sent for trial to Imphal, and convicted in the Political Agent's Court of "abetment of murder", and sentenced to transportation for life She served her sentence in the Gauhati Jail (Sources) Captain C W L Harvey, M C , I A , (Indian Political Department), PMSD, 1932, and G P Stewart I C S PMSD, 1933

A R H MacDonald, PMSD on 20th February 1939, outrightly rejected the Mahasabha's Resolution No 5 advocating the immediate release of the Kabui girl In a letter No 2266 Case, addressed to the President of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha, Mr MacDonald wrote on 20th February 1939

"I do not know why the Mahasabha called the woman *Rani Gaidiliu* I think the title "Rani" was first bestowed upon her by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in a speech made at Silchar, *[We think of this State (Manipur) also in connection with Rani Gaidiliu, the brave Naga girl* Nehru], but, whereas almost total ignorance of his subject was to be expected from a political agitator speaking without serious preparation on a case which he had had no opportunity of studying and which arose in a State he had never visited (Nehru visited Manipur for the first time on 23rd October 1952), it is surprising and painful to hear even his most ridiculous errors slavishly repeated by Manipuris in Manipur

"Gaidiliu was a Kabui sorceress She had a partner called Jadonang, who was a Kabui sorcerer These two together started a religious cult among the wild hill Kabuis One of the doctrines of this cult was that the Kabuis were destined to establish their dominion over all other tribes the cult might be regarded as political The cult was suppressed by the Administration because its chief and most essential rite was "human sacrifice" Many persons, mostly Kukis and Meiteis were murdered as sacrificial victims to the cult Jadonang and Gaidiliu were arrested, regularly tried and both were convicted of the murder of four Meitei travellers Jadonang was hanged, and Gaidiliu was sentenced on 11th January 1933 to transportation for life

"I hope the Mahasabha will agree that the immediate release of Gaidiliu is both undeserved and undesirable ***Whether the Mahasabha agrees or not, no amount of agitation will procure the release of Gaidiliu.***"

3 See Memo No 4242 G/1B-35 of 5th June 1939 from Mr A R H MacDonald, PMSD to Irabot, PNMM

4 See Memo No 4153 G/dated Imphal the 23rd May 1939 from A R H MacDonald PMSD to Judicial Member, MSD

5 Op Cit

6 Mr A R H MacDonald Esq, acted as President, Manipur State Darbar upto 1st August 1939, and on the day (1 8 39) Mr T A Sharpe Esq, I C S, took charge of the post

7 See Memo No 83 N M M, dated 7th June 1939 from the President, Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha to the President, Manipur State Darbar

8 Memo No 4574 G of 29th June 1939 from PMSD to the President, N M M

9 See Memo No 261 G/1B-35, dated Imphal the 15th July 1939 from PMSD to the Secretary, Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha

10 See Memo No 257 G/1B-35 dated 15th July 1939 from PMSD to PNMM

11 The constitution of the Courts in the Manipur Valley and Jiribam was as under (1938-1939)

His Highness's Revisional Court
The Darbar- Administrative and Judicial Courts
The Cherap Court
The Sadar Panchayet Court
The Court of the *Mouzadar*, Jiribam
Kangpokpi Foreigners' Panchayet Court
[13] Rural Panchayet Courts

12 Hijam Irabot Singh had resigned from the Membership of the Sadar Panchayet Court on 14th March 1939

13 See Memo No 256 G/1B-35 of 15th July 1939 from the PMSD to the Secretary, NMM

14 See Memo No 99 NMM dated Imphal 26th July 1939 from H Irabot Singh, PNMM to A R H MacDonald, PMSD

15 See Memo No 476 G/1B-35 dated 1st August 1939, from the President, MSD, to the President, NMM

16 His Highness's proclamation of 9th June 1913 *Conveyance or carriage, Seba and free supply of food were abolished, but supply of food fodder etc on payment remained unchanged* The imposition of *Pothang* and "forced labour" on the villagers of Manipur was finally withdrawn from 15th July 1947 on the birthday of Maharaja Bodh Chandra Singh [The 15th July, 1947 O No 41P "The imposition of POTHANG (Begar) and Forced Labour on my Hill subjects in my concern except on mutual agreement or Voluntary service in the interest of the State or otherwise is withdrawn from to-day my Birth Day, the 15th July, 1947" Bodh Chandra Singh, Maharaja of Manipur] See *The Manipur State Gazette* published by Order of H H the Maharajah, No 2, Imphal, Wednesday, July 23, 1947, Part II, P 2

17 Manipur State Darbar Resolution No 1A of 28th October 1931 *'Considered petitions complaining that the public are compelled to supply Seba, Sentry and conveyance to the State servants The Darbar desire that the public should know that Seba and conveyance have been totally abolished and that the State servants may not demand such service from the people The practice of Sentry will continue as in the past for the Land Revenue Collection staff for the present but arrangements for its abolition are now under consideration '*

18 See Memo No 112 NMM, dated 31st August 1939, from the President, N M M to PMSD

19 See Memo No 105 NMM, dated 4th August 1939 from N Thanin Singh, Secretary, NMM to PMSD

20 Rf to Memo No 2577/W1 dated 22nd December 1930 from B C Gasper, V P, MSD to the Judicial Member, MSD

21 See Memo No 113 NMM dated 8th September 1939 from the President, NMM to PMSD, also Rf to Judicial Member's reply No 2286 of 2nd October 1939 to the PMSD's No 1130 G of 26th September 1939

CHAPTER EIGHT

(I)

'The appointed time had come for the arrival of a 'New Maharaja' riding on a white elephant ' – an old prophecy, E F Lydall, I C S, PMSD, 1943

Slogans like *"Price of rice has gone high because the Marwari merchants and the shopkeepers purchase it in great quantity, turn out the Marwari merchants and the shopkeepers from villages of Manipur they (Marwaris) take money from the illiterate State subjects by force"* were already heard by the Manipuris in the late 1920s Taking advantage of this great discontent caused by the high price of rice, many people had started agitations to drive the Marwari merchants out of Manipur Petitions were filed to the President of the Manipur State Darbar all clamouring for reductions in the price of rice, clothes and other imported articles The Manipuris of the time had an idea to boycott the Marwaris and to carry on the trade of the country by Manipuri agency only But the British officials well knew that the Manipuris would be quite incapable of carrying out the large-scale business as was done by the Marwaris They also knew that the real grievance of the people was always effected by the high price of rice The feelings of the local Manipuris against the Marwari merchants could be clearly seen in their demands (from His Highness the Maharaja) like the issue of orders to completely stop the export of rice outside the State, an official ban on the Manipuri men and women from entering any Marwaris' shops to sell or to purchase anything from them, and if found, he or she had to be degraded from their caste, and an order to the village *Chawkidars* and other petty State officials to stop the practice of supplying large quantity of rice to the Marwari shopkeepers who lived in the villages

An important factor, which aroused feelings of disgust to the Manipuris against the Marwari merchants, was that the latter were allowed to export rice from Manipur with condition to stop it when the price of rice rose to Rs 3 per maund [1] But certain Marwaris were granted the pass to export the rice to meet Government purposes even during the time of prohibition The grievance was that many of the Marwari merchants,

without at least considering the needs of the public had always tried to avoid the restriction under cover of the RED PASS.

In a mass application submitted to the Judicial Member of the Darbar on 28th September 1920, the general public of Manipur had reported that many women of the adjacent villages used to supply rice in large quantity to the Marwari merchants at night, and thus, they could be ascribed as an important factor in bringing the high price of rice The same habit of the village women in their dealings with the Marwaris recurred again during the uprising of December 1939 The men folk of the village area were also, not in the least, responsible for the outbreak as they carried the rice from one village to another for the moneyed Marwari merchants The nature of the agitations against the high price of rice and the export trade which had occurred in 1920 and 1939 respectively was the same, but the names of the chief promoters of the two uprisings were different

As elsewhere in the country, Manipur suffered from the "general financial depression" of all markets with the result that the cultivators had little money to pay their revenue and they found it increasingly difficult to borrow To help them the Manipur State Darbar instituted a change in the revenue collection season by extending the last date of collection before the imposition of fines But this could not alleviate the extreme hardships felt by the cultivators as the two uncontrollable practices in the rise of high price and the export trade in rice could not be properly checked and put an end to A brief survey of the annual fluctuating price and the amount of rice exported annually outside the State would indicate an outline of the economic conditions experienced by both the villagers and the townspeople during the financial depression period of the 1930s -

1931- Weather in the valley was good, although some untimely rainfall had slightly affected the outturn of rice The price of rice remained normal and the prices prevailing in the Imphal bazar of paddy and of rice (1st quality) had ranged between 26 seers and 6 *Chataks* per rupee, and in August and September 1931 to 22 seers per rupee

1932- Although weather was good throughout the year, there was a general feeling of discontent among the cultivators Because all the greater that the year (1932) with such a good yield had, proved of such little benefit to the cultivators owing to the 'financial depression' of the neighbouring districts The price of rice fell considerably towards the end of March/April 1932, and the price of rice (1st quality) prevalent in the Imphal bazar was only one rupee for 34 seers

1933- The price of rice was very low in comparison with previous years dropping to 46 seers to the rupee at the end of March 1933

1934- The price of rice was again low during the year, averaging 41½ seers to the rupee No embargo was placed on the export of rice during the year

1935- The price was much higher than in the previous year The average rate was 33 seers to the rupee as against 41½ seers to the rupee in 1934

1936- The price was again higher and the average rate was 21 seers to the rupee as against 33 seers to the rupee in the previous year The price of other food grains was also comparatively high During the year 1,89 608 *maunds* of rice and 1 00 304 *maunds* of *Chira* were exported Of this amount 9 164 *maunds* of rice were supplied for Government purposes It was noteworthy that the Marwari merchants *viz* Messrs Mangal Chand Megharaj and Co of Imphal and Messrs Mangal Chand Kisturchand Imphal held the contract of the Cart-Tax monopoly for which they made a collection of Rs 38 530 and Rs 37 386 respectively during the year 1936 The State Government received from them Rs 59 000 as the royalty for the monopoly right

1937 The normal price of rice was 26 seers to the rupee, and in the year 2 40 625 *maunds* of rice and 1 26,798 *maunds* of *Chira* were exported 8 643 *maunds* of rice were supplied for the Government purpose

1938 The average rate was 26 8 seers to the rupee and 2,61,716 *maunds* of rice and 1,53 955 *maunds* of *Chira* were exported 9 131 *maunds* of rice were meant for the Government purpose

1939 The price of rice was lower than in the previous year, being about 32 seers to the rupee or Rs 1 annas 4 a *maund* The total quantity of rice exported from the Manipur State from 1st July 1938 to 30th June 1939 by Mangal Chand Kisturchand who were the Cart-Tax Monopolists was as follows [2]

Total export of rice	3 72 174 mds 37 seers
Total export of *Chira*	1 98 558 mds 32 seers

Out of which the following quantities were supplied for the Government purposes

Kohima Battalion	Rice 8 308 mds 26 seers 4 chh
Kohima Civil Jail	Rice 405 mds
Kohima Hospital	Rice 389 mds 18 seers 10 chh

During the year there was a remarkable increase in the demand for power for rice-mills. It had grown very suddenly and came not only from the "original consumers" who were the Marwari rice merchants in the bazar, but also from many Manipuris as well. Unfortunately it was not possible to meet this demand as the existing mills had already consumed all the power, which the scheme could supply. The increased demand was beyond anything, which could have been foreseen, but it was fully realized that extra power would have to be supplied to meet the extra demand.[3]

1940- The average price of rice during the year was Rs.2 per *maund*, but it rose by a couple of annas at the time of the women's uprising. Before the rice-export was prohibited on 13th December 1939, 46,359 *maunds* of rice were exported.

1940-1941 (1st July 1940 to 30th June 1941) – The price of rice was Rs.2/8/ per *maund*. During the previous year it had risen from Rs.1/12/ to Rs.2 – a rise which had had its share in provoking the women's uprising. 2,52,602 *maunds* and 18 seers of rice were exported during the period mentioned above.[4]

The President of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha made the first public 'importunate demand' against the export of rice in the first week of September 1939. Irabot requested the President of the Darbar to issue order for an immediate stoppage of the rice export as the price had gone upto the margin of Rs.3/4/ per *maund*. The other Members of the Darbar were also made to recall one of the important resolutions, which was adopted earlier in 1916 when the Vice President had proposed that the price of rice in Manipur would never exceed Rs.3 per *maund* of 40 seers. As a matter of course, the public in Manipur did not raise any slogans to stop export of rice for the Government rations at Kohima and Sadiya Battalions.

An excessive rainfall during the last week of July and the first week of August 1939, had seriously damaged the standing paddy crops and vegetables, and the same cause in the next two months had an adverse effect on the harvesting of the early paddy. As a great apprehension of famine became imminent in Manipur, the Darbar made a hurried resolution on 13th September 1939, that the export of rice should be closed until further orders. After the issue of Notification No.115 which referred to the Darbar resolution of 13th September (1939) prohibiting the export of rice outside Manipur, on the next day, i.e. (14th September) the Marwari rice merchants approached the Political Agent asking for permission to export rice on the "pending passes" which were issued on

the 13th itself After having obtained the necessary permission from the Political Agent the Marwaris again exported rice upto the 20th of the month Great doubts came to the minds of the general public with questions as to how so many passes which were alleged to have been issued on 13th September had remained as "pending passes" in the hands of the Marwaris *Their open and defiant activities in the rice trade naturally brought great suspicion on the genuineness of the alleged passes*

For a second time the Marwaris of the Imphal town again approached the Political Agent to permit them to export all the rice in their alleged old stocks Actually the Marwaris had planned to export all the available rice by purchasing from the local villagers during the days permitted to them for the export trade bit by bit without the knowledge of the authorities by underhand employment of their own men If they could obtain the permission, they would have exported much more rice than what they did before getting the Darbar's Orders

On 22nd September 1939, Irabot wrote a letter to Mr T A Sharpe who succeeded Mr A R H MacDonald on 1st August 1939 as President of the Darbar [5]

> Most respectfully I approach you to kindly take immediate steps by checking personally the alleged old stock with a Manipuri Darbar Member that they may not in any way deceive the authorities *Otherwise the suffering of the poor Manipuri subjects will become unbearable If there be any rice in their old stock let them sell it out to the State subjects*

(II)

December 1939 The Women's Uprising

The most important event of the year 1939 was the outbreak in December of the disturbances known as NUPI LAN or the WOMEN'S WAR The immediate cause of the outbreak was the rise in the price of rice The Marwari merchants in the Imphal town who set up rice-mills had bought the entire paddy they could get, milled it and exported it outside the State The export trade and a disappointing harvest hit the poorer towns folk hard when they were already suffering from the loss of their regular earnings from 'husking paddy Demonstrations were held and the women demanded the cessation of rice exports and the closing of all rice-mills

The first uprising took place on 12th December 1939 when a huge number of women came to the State Office and insisted that the President of the Manipur State Darbar, Mr T A Sharpe [who came to Manipur only

in the first week of August 1939] should immediately forbid the export of rice Mr Sharpe pointed out that such an order would require the sanction of the Maharaja who had gone to Nabadwip for pilgrimage on 22nd November The women accompanied Mr Sharpe to the Telegraph Office so that he could wire to the Maharaja. When he had done so, the women kept him there to await the Maharaja's reply The Commandant of the 4th Assam Rifles, Major G.F.X Bulfield and the Civil Surgeon, Major P H Cummins (I M S) who came to the rescue of Mr Sharpe, were also kept in the Telegraph Office. The compound of the Telegraph Office, which was in the British Reserve, was finally cleared by a detachment of the Assam Rifles But the officers could not get out of the compound until 11 30 at night

On 13th December a message was received from the Maharaja asking Mr Gimson, the Political Agent, to help prevent the export of rice, and an order forbidding it was promptly issued The women then turned their attention to the rice-mills and they extorted written promises (chits) from the mill owners that they would not work their mills At night, news came that a mill owner had soaked and boiled some paddy to make parboiled rice and it caused the angry crowd of some 10,000 (ten thousand) women to march on one of the largest mills in the State It was only after the electric switches of the rice-mills were removed by order of Mr Gimson that he could persuade the women crowd to go home

New excitements had flared up again on 29th December (1939) On the day before (28th December), some carters whose rice had been thrown into the gutter lodged a complaint in the Court of the Political Agent, naming 5 (five) women as their assailants The Agency Thana thereupon asked the State Police to produce the 5 women so that their statements could be recorded A large crowd of women objected to this, and besieged the Police Inspector (Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh, Inspector of Civil Police) in the State Thana for several hours alleging that *he had kicked an elderly Brahmin woman* Threats to murder the Inspector were shouted but he succeeded in spiriting himself away to the Palace [6]

Mr Gimson made an official announcement (dated 16th December 1939) to the Press and the public of Manipur, which he thought was an *'accurate document'* The *Communiqué* was considered authentic and it was forwarded to Mr J P Mills Esq , I C S , Secretary to the Governor of Assam for information

Mr. Gimson reported that on the morning of 12th December, a large crowd consisting mostly of women had surrounded the Darbar Hall

in Imphal to petition for the immediate stoppage of the export of rice from Manipur The Darbar passed a resolution and at about 1 30 p m , Mr F A Sharpe, the President, had telegraphed to His Highness the Maharaja who was away on a pilgrimage to Nabadwip asking him to approve of the stoppage of rice export The crowd, which went with the President to the Telegraph Office, became excited and they demanded an IMMEDIATE ORDER, although they were told clearly that a reply from His Highness could not be received for some hours The crowd, which by this time had numbered about 4,000 persons with the women still in a majority confined the President of the Darbar and the Civil Surgeon (Major P H Cummins) and some other officers in the Telegraph Office and refused to allow the latter to leave, even to take food About 2 30 p m the Commandant of the 4th Battalion Assam Rifles (Major G.F X Bulfield), having heard of the confinement of the other officers came to the Telegraph Office but he was also prevented from leaving again by the crowd of women The attitude of the crowd grew threatening and at about 2 45 p m a platoon of the Assam rifles had arrived The crowd grew more excited and very soon they began to throw stones at the Telegraph Office at which two windows were broken The situation was so dangerous that the troops were called in to clear the compound and the troops did this in a few minutes amid a fusillade of stones by pushing back the women with their rifles Order was thus restored, but the crowd had remained on the road outside the compound without dispersing and the officers were unable to leave the Telegraph Office until nearly midnight

In the clearing of the compound 21 (twenty one) women were injured either by stones or by rifle butts The Civil Surgeon and three other medical men who were present had treated them all on the spot There were no injuries of a serious nature, but five of the women were removed to the Civil Hospital and detained for further treatment, while the others had returned to their homes **Although reports were circulated that bayonets had wounded the women, Mr. Gimson strongly counter alleged that the reports were wholly erroneous and there were no bayonet wounds.** It was believed that the men and boys in the crowd threw most of the stones, but some were certainly thrown by women The situation was so threatening that the "use of force" was thought essential at the time for the protection of life and property There were times of anxiety when large crowds of excited women, numbering as much as 10,000 had gathered round the rice-mills and threatened destruction, but there were no further violences and all the rice-mills in Manipur were closed and the situation was peaceful again

Both of the 'reports' on the women's uprising as prepared by the President of the Darbar and the Political Agent were submitted to His Excellency the Governor of Assam But there were some differences in the factual narration of the incident as reported in the petition of the local leaders, submitted on a subsequent date to the Governor of Assam After a brief account of the incident of the 12th December (1939) the petition made the following exposition on the mismanagement of His Highness the Maharaja and his State officials

The Manipur State administration was conducted by His Highness the Maharaja and the Political Agent through a Darbar, which consisted of an I C S European Officer, formerly deputed by the Local Government of Assam All the six Darbar Members (3 Ordinary and 3 Additional) were nominated by His Highness the Maharaja and most of them had "near relation" with His Highness The Darbar reserved three important State functions in their hands, *viz* , Administration, Legislature and Judicial They decided cases of both Civil and Criminal natures The Darbar was the highest Court in the State and appeals from the Darbar lay to His Highness only, who got the power to decide the appeals in consultation with the Political Agent *No appeal could go to any higher authority against the order of His Highness's Revisional Court*

There were two other subordinate courts known as the Cherap and the Sadar Panchayet Court, the members of which were all nominated by His Highness and who had "near relation" with the Maharaja Most of the Members were illiterate (they even could not write their own names) and extremely loyal to His Highness The publics were totally ignorant of the income and expenditure of the State, and the Resolutions, which were approved in the sittings of the Administrative Darbar, were not made known to the public, who however, were made responsible for those resolutions The public had to carry burdens of many taxes from various sources like - land revenue, road, fishery, forest toll station, grass mahals, water, cycle, vehicle (lorry), foreigners, income, *Wakheisel Mangba-Sengba*, *Pandit Loisang* (for marriage purpose), *Sentek, Pach-Napet, Chandan Senkhai Kumjan Sen* and tax for singers etc All the taxes were not added to the income of the State, and some were meant for the private expense of His Highness and other State officers[11]

The main trade of the State lay in the hands of a few Marwari merchants who were wise enough to reduce the price of rice at very short notice The Cart-Tax Monopoly contractors were also the Marwari merchants and they could ask the Darbar to open any time for the export

trade. As a result of an excessive rainfall in the year (1939) there had occurred an adverse effect on the harvesting of early paddy; and again hail damaged the standing crops. The public had a great fear of meeting a famine due to the scarcity of rice, and they therefore, requested the Darbar to stop the rice-export trade.

On 12th December 1939, the women mass had gone to the State Darbar and they requested Mr. T.A. Sharpe, President of the Darbar, to issue an order to stop the rice export. Mr. Sharpe, however, told the women that he could wire for an approval of order from His Highness the Maharaja who was at Nabadwip at the time. So he took the women to the Telegraph Office where,[8]

"The assemblage were turned out by bayonet charge causing wounds to 22 (twenty two) women, 5 (five) with severe hurts His Highness and his Darbar are taking steps to increase the agitation by adopting new methods to assault the public (both men and women) with his military and civil police forces The public are made victims in the hands of the Civil and Military Police whose numbers have been increased to assault the peace loving public On the whole, the rule of justice has been replaced by a REIGN OF TERROR "

Although the immediate cause of the women's uprising was economic in nature, there was also a strong feeling of dissatisfaction with the State Administration over the *Mangba-Sengba* scandal of the year before (1938), and the long suppressed feelings of discontent causing from the unnatural imposition of various taxes on the poor public by His Highness the Maharaja. The fact that the Maharaja was the head of the *Brahma Sabha* caused a loss of confidence in the Administration. The Darbar, who were somewhat "out of touch with the public" also shared in this loss of confidence. Mr. E.F. Lydall, PMSD, remarked:[9]

"Coming on top of this loss of confidence, the Women's War caused a breakdown of the Administration, manifested mainly by the inadequacy, both in numbers and efficiency, of the State Police "

As a result of the petitions submitted by a number of the villagers asking for an immediate stoppage of the rice-export, an Administrative Darbar was hurriedly arranged in the early hours of the 12th December just a while before the incident at the Telegraph Office had taken place. Three Members of the Darbar (Forest, Foreigners and Registration) considered that the increase in the price of rice to rupee one per *Sangbai* during the harvest time had certainly indicated a shortage of rice in Manipur and they apprehended that there would be famine unless the export was immediately banned. The three Members were in favour of stopping the export of rice completely until enquiries were made to ascertain the actual available stock of rice in Manipur. However, the Judicial Member and the

President of the Darbar dissented from this view, as they did not consider that the increase in the price of rice was due to any appreciable shortage They argued that there must be a considerable amount of rice available for export and thus they wanted to re-consider the matter at a later Darbar after ascertaining the approximate amount of rice available in Manipur The Police Member was not in favour of an immediate ban on export and he was in favour of a restriction pending enquiry Opinion was divided, and at last all the Members were unanimous in looking over a 'Report' to be submitted by the Land Settlement and Land Revenue Offices on the size of the harvest, which was procured during the year 1939-40 But it was before the 'unhurried checking' of the awaited Report was seen, that the upheaval of the WOMEN'S WAR actually came into reality

(III)

The Telegraph Office Incident

On 13th December (afternoon) Mr Gimson wired a telegraphic message to Mr J P Mills, Secretary to the Governor of Assam, who again transmitted the same to Polindia, New Delhi on the day after (14th) The message read

"Yesterday Manipuri women with some men besieged Darbar to enforce stoppage of rice export Darbar passed resolution recommending stoppage and wired to His Highness for approval At telegraph office unruly crowd waited for reply until midnight Reply did not come Some stones thrown and slight damage to telegraph office windows done Six men Assam Rifles slightly injured by stones No further occurrence anticipated but Manipuri women are blocking exit of rice lorries Written report will follow Political Agent Manipur

[See Tele No 70 to Secga, Shillong, dated 13 December 1939 from Political Manipur]

On the same day (13 December), the Secretary of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha also wired a message to His Excellency the Governor of Assam as follows

"About 4 (four) thousand Manipuri women approached Darbar for stoppage rice exporting [12th 8 a m] owing recent abnormal rise of price in harvest season Darbar declined passing final orders pending His Highness's order President took assemblage to telegraph office to apprise them of His Highness's decision from Nabadwip At about 3 p m unarmed assemblage dispersed by Assam Rifles About 20 (twenty) women received wounds from bayonet and trampled under foot 5 (five) in hospital 2 (two) yet unconscious All Manipuri shops, bazars observing complete *hartal* for two days " – Secretary, Mahasabha

Mr Gimson was immediately instructed from Shillong to issue a "*full and accurate statement* contradicting the inaccuracies spread by

the Mahasabha or any press. He (Mr. Gimson) therefore, reported to Shillong without delay:

"Occurrence took place in British Reserve *No wounds caused by bayonets Five women detained in hospital slight injuries* " [See Tele. No.76-P, from P.A., Manipur to Secga, Shillong, 14 December 1939.]

On the day of the incident at the Telegraph Office (12th December 1939) at Imphal, at about 8 p.m. Mr. Gimson was in camp in a Kuki village about 6 miles from Sugnu, which was about 40 miles south of Imphal, when his A.S.I. of Police arrived and told him that there was a strong agitation in Imphal against the export of rice, and that things were looking ugly. Mr. Gimson got back to Imphal about 3 a.m. in the morning of 13th December. When he was talking to the crowd of women at about 1.30 p.m. (13th) a telegram arrived from His Highness the Maharaja asking him to help in the stoppage of rice export. Orders were issued at once stopping it, and Mr. Gimson thought that would satisfy the women crowd. But there were still the gathering about and he suspected further trouble. He arranged with Major Bulfield to have the troops ready Mr. Gimson was given information that the troops had to turn the women out of the telegraph office compound on the 12th and six of them were more or less injured with stones, and there were five or six women in the hospital.

The women now claimed that all the rice mills should be closed down. Mr. Gimson thought that there were valid grounds for closing the export of rice, as the price was more than double the normal in that time of year. Moreover the Marwari merchants were buying all they could lay their hands on. Although there was a reasonable harvest stocks were not large after the heavy export of the last season. The anti-Marwari agitation was a strong point and the local Congress people were supposed to have been behind the stone-throwing incident of the 12th. Mr. Gimson received reports that there would be a giant procession through the bazar on the night of the 13th, but he did not intend to stop it so long it was orderly, as it might prove a safety-valve.

On the next day (14th December) things seemed to have taken a turn for the worse. One Marwari who had a rice-mill at Mantri Pukhri (outside the British Reserve) was reported to have run his mill on the 14th in the morning. He had certainly boiled some paddy, but it was not known whether he used the electric power or not. Crowds of women started to march towards Mantri Pukhri in the evening of the day, but Mr. Gimson got there before them by car and he agreed that the Hydro Electric Board would not supply power to mills and the Marwaris also

gave chits saying that they would not use their mills After a lot of talk, in which threats of smashing up houses and the boilers were freely used, the women crowd had finally dispersed about 8.30 p.m. when the main fuses were removed from the buildings. *The women were all quite friendly to Mr Gimson personally*, but the temper of the crowd seemed worse than 13th

The women did not attend the bazar for two days. There was quite a strong party, which wanted to sit, and also the party, which had a wish to sell rice, began to appear. However, the embargo party was in power and threats of more violence were being uttered against the Marwaris The crowd of women and some men had gone to the State Police Bazar outside the British Reserve and there they held a meeting There were more than 10,000 (ten thousand) in the gathering! At first, the women decided as much against the advice of men, to go and break up all the rice-mills, beginning with those belonging to the Manipuris When the crowd went to the Manipuri mill owners they all gave chits promising that they would not use their mills The women then returned to the British Reserve about 5.30 p m. and met Mr Gimson at the bazar just as the procession of the women came from the other side The crowds were quite friendly on the whole and Mr. Gimson argued with them for a long while He was suddenly informed that one of the women injured in the turmoil outside the Telegraph Office had been taken from the hospital and died The situation looked serious, but luckily Major Cummins and the Sub-Assistant Surgeon came up soon after and they knew that no one had been taken from the hospital. When two or three of the spokeswomen were taken to the hospital and showed the women to them they easily came back to the crowd and declared that *the women were much better and no one had died*

Mr Gimson was of opinion that the agitation was wholly a *"Women's Affair"* and men and boys were round the outside The agitation was mainly anti-Marwari *Rice was much dearer than usual and owing to the mills the women had lost their small earnings from husking paddy In the main the basis was genuinely economic, but some of the agitators had certainly taken advantage of the situation* [7] In the meetings held on the 13th December about the embargo on the export of rice, severe and open criticism of His Highness the Maharaja were freely uttered When Mr Gimson talked to the crowd of women on 14th December (1 30 p m.) one of them said that even if the export of rice were closed, *His Highness would take bribes from the Marwaris to let the rice out* This probably had a special reference to an incident, which occurred a few months ago

when the rice-export was closed In a Confidential Letter to Mr J P Mills, Secretary to the Governor of Assam, Mr Gimson wrote on 14th December (1939)

> There was a large profit to be made in Assam in *Chira* and *the Marwaris were getting hold of the Manipuris who claimed that they had stocks which they should be allowed to export* They went to His Highness the Maharaja and paid Rs 2 000 or 3 000 for the right to export this but as I alone was issuing passes for export and the embargo was still in force these Manipuris and their *Kayas* (Marwari) financer could not get the *Chira* out Then His Highness urged the Darbar to let out this stock but before this was through export was opened again and all were free to take out rice and *Chira* His Highness did not refund the money and soon after he left the State for Nabadwip where he still is

[Mr Gimson firmly believed that the story was true and all the Manipuris and foreigners had shared the confidence!!]

No incident occurred on the 15th December (1939), but in the afternoon a crowd of women came and presented a petition to Mr Gimson asking that they should wholly receive all the rice contracts and such other things It was not certain whether the women would return to the bazar sooner or later but upto that date (15th December) Mr Gimson could not procure any evidence from the Manipuri side as regards the unfortunate incident of the Telegraph Office of 12th December, and he had to talk to Major Cummins the Civil Surgeon about the incident but the latter was away treating one Lindsay Smith in Kohima Of the five women taken to the hospital for treatment three could have been discharged on the 15th itself but they were detained for further examination by the Civil Surgeon The other two women were to be discharged in a day or two

Mr Gimson took statements from the officers who were confined in the Telegraph Office except Major Bulfield Major Cummins and T A Sharpe who personally submitted written reports He however could not get any statements from the crowd except those of the five women who were detained in the hospital

Things seemed to have settled down by the middle of the month and some women were already sitting in the bazar on 16th December *Many of the leading women told the Political Agent that they had no ill feeling towards the Assam Rifles or any of the Officers* Others might have different views but these were the SPOKESWOMEN throughout!

His Highness the Maharaja was due to come back on the night of the 16th December and reports were received that a large concourse of women would wait for the Maharaja on the road but the object was not clearly understood by anyone in the crowd The main complaints of the

women mass now seemed to be directed against the Manipur State Darbar Members The day on which the Maharaja of Manipur was expected to arrive in the State, Hijam Irabot also came back to Imphal from Cachar He had been away from Manipur from 12th November to 14th December (1939) for propaganda works in connection with the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha On the evening of the 14th he received a telegram saying **"there was an agitation of the women against the export of rice."** He had dropped his programme and left Cachar on the 15th to reach Imphal next day at 5 15 p m He immediately arranged a public gathering and made an address before a large crowd of women at Chingmeirong saying that THEY HAD DONE WELL[110]

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Appointed Time had come for the Arrival of a New Maharaja Riding on a White Elephant.

1 See Manipur State Darbar Resolution No 5 of 14th June 1916 Considered the Vice President s proposals that the price of rice in Manipur shall not exceed Rs 3 per maund of 40 seers Resolved that the suggestion be adopted until further orders

2 See letter from Mangal Chand Kisturchand (Cart Tax Monopolists) Manipur State to the PMSD dated Imphal 2nd October 1939

3 F F Lydall I C S PMSD *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1938 1939 Imphal printed at the State Printing Press 1943 p 27

4 The price of rice as was prevalent in Manipur during and after the **Women s War** of 1939 was as follows

Year	**Rs Per maund**
1939	1/12
1940	2
1941	2/8
1942 [Early]	3
1942 [15st April]	7
1942 [30th April]	10
1942 August	25
1942 November	8/ &10/
1943 January	16/&20/
1943 March	25/ &30/
1943 April	10
1943 [15st June]	40/ &50/

Year	Rs. Per maund
1943 November	35
1944 April	25
1944 May	40
1944 June	50/ &60/

5 See Memo No 122 N M M , dated 22nd September 1939 from Hijam Irabot Singh, President, Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha to the PMSD

6 E F Lydall, I C S , PMSD, *Administration Report of the Manipur State*, for the year 1939-1940, Imphal, printed at the State Printing Press, 1943

7. ***Press Communiqué***, enclosure to letter dated 16th December 1939 from C Gimson Political Agent Manipur State to J P Mills Esq , Secretary to the Governor of Assam

8 No D, 1306 – P (A)/40 from the Secretary to His Excellency the Crown Representative, Political Department, New Delhi, dated 1st April 1940 to Secretary to His Excellency the Governor of Assam, with enclo "Petition" from Magho Singh, Lalit Madhab Sharma and others, Imphal, dated 21st March 1940 with accompaniment

9 E F Lydall, PMSD, *Administration Report* Op Cit, p 3

10 See Confidential Letter dated 16th December 1939 from C Gimson to J P Mills

CHAPTER NINE

(I)

The Occurrence at the Telegraph Office on 12th December 1939 with Statements of Witnesses and the Injury Reports of the 5 (five) Manipuri Women

Upto the last week of December 1939, no Manipuri witnesses came forward to give evidence On the day following the occurrence (13th December) a petition was filed by 31 members of the public[1] Six of these had appeared before the Political Agent but they stated that they did not wish to give any evidence They were asked to inform the other petitioners that if they wished to give evidence they had to appear before the Political Agent to do so No one came As the injuries were not really serious, the Political Agent did no longer think it necessary to insist on their giving evidence The main facts of the occurrence were as follows

On 11th December, a deputation consisting of men and women came and requested the President of the Darbar that the export of rice from the State should be prohibited because the price was very high The President thus called a special Darbar meeting to consider the request Next day on 12th a resolution was passed at the Darbar meeting at about 10 30 a m with the majority of the Members being in favour of stopping the export There was a crowd of men and women outside the Darbar Hall and they demanded an immediate order from the President forbidding the export The President told the crowd that he could not give such an order and that he was about to send a telegram to His Highness the Maharaja, who was away at Nabadwip, asking for orders At first the women refused to allow the President to leave the Darbar Hall but later they went with him to the Telegraph Office where the telegram was handed in The Civil Surgeon and some other officers who had heard that trouble was brewing accompanied the President This was about 2 p m The crowd surrounded the Telegraph Office and refused to allow any of the officers confined there to leave The President tried to persuade them to disperse but without success He was not allowed to go to his *bungalow*, which was within a stone's throw of the Telegraph Office, even to take his food

Meanwhile having heard that an unpleasant situation was developed, the Sub-Inspector of the Agency Police informed the Commandant of the 4th Assam Rifles who went and joined the other officers in the Telegraph Office He was also not allowed by the women crowd to leave the Telegraph Office, unless he promised that he would not call the troops He refused to give such a promise The crowd was excited and it became more restive and all the efforts made by the President and the other officers had no effect By now it was clear that the situation was becoming really serious and one Captain Stone came to the spot with some men of the Assam Rifles This was a precautionary measure because the officers were believed to be in grave danger *He was not summoned*

No attempt was made to disperse the crowd at this stage and the men of the Assam Rifles were kept not in the Telegraph Office compound but in the adjoining Post Office compound Their presence seemed to excite some sections of the crowd which was estimated to number 4,000, and soon afterwards the noise increased and stones were thrown at the Telegraph Office building It was now clear that the temper of the crowd became dangerous and that both men and women were getting out of control So the Commandant urgently ordered Captain Stone "to bring his men into the Telegraph Office compound and clear it The compound was cleared amid a hail of stones, a platoon of the Assam Rifles forcing their way through the crowd and pushing it back Women were in a great majority and *many of them tried to snatch away the rifles of the men some being injured in the attempt* Mr Gimson wrote in his Confidential Letter to the Secretary to the Governor of Assam

> 21 women and one Indian Officer and 7 other ranks of the Assam Rifles were injured All were treated on the spot by the Civil Surgeon and three other medical officers who were present The injuries to the troops were caused by stones *Some of the women were injured by the stones thrown from the back of the crowd and others by rifle butts in resisting the troops There were not any bayonet wounds although the troops had fixed bayonets*

After the compound was cleared the crowd did not disperse and they remained on the road beside the Telegraph Office compound No attempt was made to disperse them from there and the officers were not able to leave the Telegraph Office until nearly midnight The Assam Rifles troops continued to line the boundaries of the compound until after midnight Mr Gimson further reported that "there were no really serious injuries", but the five women had to be detained in the hospital for a few days It was strange that the women did not wish to leave the hospital even when they were found fit for discharge

While giving comments on the above incidents, the Political Agent expressed that the officers concerned had carried out the distasteful task of handling a mob of an "excited and utterly unreasonable women" with great patience. There was no provocation given of any kind. It seemed clear that the arrival of the troops had excited and irritated the crowd, and this led directly to the stone throwing, which again led to the use of force to clear the compound. The provocation came wholly from the crowd which not only confined the Government and State officers for nearly 12 hours but also started aggressive action by throwing stones. Although regretted that force had to be used against the unarmed crowd of women the Political Agent said it was satisfactory that the injuries were not more serious and harmful. Because a *lathi* charge by the Civil Police on the disorderly crowd of people would have caused far more damage. The use of force was necessary to protect lives and property when the stone throwing against the troops began. Major Bulfield was well aware of the Manipuri characters and he liked the people. He had had experience of riotous mobs in Chittagong and in Calcutta and in his opinion the women crowd was in a **"really dangerous mood."**

On the 13th and 14th December there were large crowds of women parading the streets and visiting the rice-mills. The Manipuri and the Marwari mill owners gave chits promising that they would not work their mills. In one crowd there must have been more than 10 000 women (C Gimson) some small damage was done to two of the mills but on the whole the crowds were orderly though excited and vociferous. For a few days the women did not sit in the daily bazar and rice and paddy were not brought into the British Reserve. Some carts of paddy coming from the village area were turned back by the women crowd.

The stocks of paddy in Manipur were heavily depleted by a much larger export than usual after the previous harvest. In 1939-40 (upto June) some villages had lost all their crops in the flood. The area thus damaged was a very small proportion on the whole but that did not help the sufferers who needed cheap rice. When the export of rice was opened in November (1939) the Marwari merchants bought up all paddy they could lay their hands and exported the collected rice and paddy with a feverish haste. Thus the price of rice rapidly rose again to more than double the normal at the harvest time. In addition to this, the price of the imported 'essential commodities' were found to be unexpectedly very high – *atta dal* flour, sugar, salt and dried fish were extremely scarce owing to the war. As many of the people who lived in the Imphal area were not themselves cultivators, the cost of living expenses also



An unrulv mob ın the Imphal Telegraph Office
on Tuesday 12th December 1939



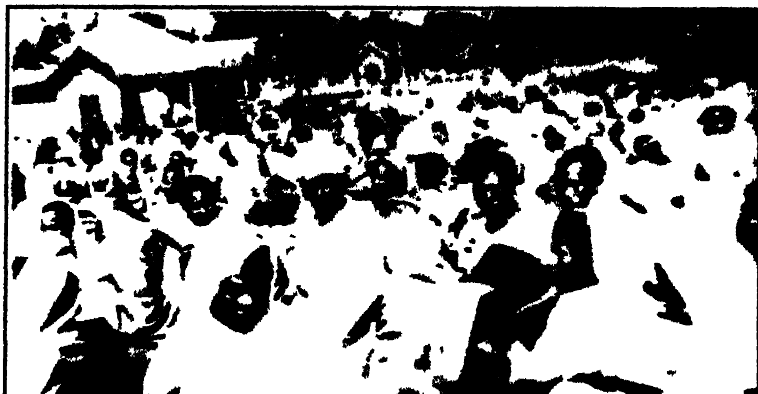
Major G.F. X. Bulfield, Commandant 4th Battalion Assam Rifles
approaching towards the Imphal Telegraph Office
on Tuesday, 12th December, 1939



' Some troops with rifles and fixed bayonets had arrived in the compound At this time the crowd became very noisy and excited Major P H Cummins (I M S), Civil Surgeon Imphal Civil Hospital



'Women were to the fore but there were many men intermingled among them' – Major G F X Bulfield
'It was not an agitation of the women but a movement of the people' Irabot, 7th January 1940



'The Women themselves do not seem to know what
they really want' – Mr C Gimson



Hijam Irabot addressing a crowd of women
at Chingmeirong on 16th December, 1939 – "You have done well"

became formidable The first attack, therefore, was on the export of rice The attack on the rice-mills was also evidently economic in nature Electric current was switched on in the Imphal plain for the first time on 25th October 1930, and a full pressure supply was given from 31st October (1930) The amount of current likely to be needed for "power" depended almost entirely on the amount of rice to be exported Before the mills started working in Manipur, the women who had earned money thereby husked the entire paddy At the time of the uprising in December nearly all the paddy was machine milled, and thus the women had lost that source of income Although the mills were now closed the women did not begin to work again in husking Mr Gimson at first hoped that when the women had gained their two major aims – *the stoppage of rice export and the closing of the rice mills* – they would settle down peacefully to constitutional methods **But it did not happen so.**

The women were now less noisy than they were and they did not march in large bodies But by still boycotting the Marwari merchants themselves they forced others to keep away who wished to trade with the foreigners The agitation was now directed mainly against the Marwari merchants, and criticisms of the Darbar Members and even of His Highness the Maharaja himself were freely uttered An 'Observation of the whole affair was noted by Mr Gimson in his letter to the Secretary to the Governor of Assam [3]

It is difficult now to find any definite object behind the agitation except a general hostility to the foreign merchants THE WOMEN THEMSELVES DO NOT SEEM TO KNOW WHAT THEY REALLY WANT Manipuri women generally show sound sense and I hope that they will soon return to sanity

[*Report* submitted by Major G.F X Bulfield, Commandant, 4th Battalion Assam Rifles, dated Imphal 13th December 1939, on the occurrence at the Telegraph Office in Imphal on 12th December 1939][4]

Tuesday. December 12th, 1939.

'At about 2 10 p m the Sub Inspector of the Agency Police came to my *bungalow* and reported that the President Manipur State Darbar (Mr T A Sharpe) and the Civil Surgeon (Major P H Cummins) were besieged by an unruly mob in the Telegraph Office There was much excitement about the question of the export of rice I immediately sent for Captain I C F Stone told him to go to the lines cause the alarm to be blown and to stand by Meanwhile I would go to the Telegraph Office taking a bugler with me, see what was happening and summon him by bugle if I considered help was required

There was a large crowd round the Telegraph Office Women were to the fore but there were many men intermingled among them I had no difficulty in entering the Telegraph Office I found Mr Sharpe and Major Cummins there with some Indian

gentlemen I was informed that the trouble was over the export of rice but that no assistance was required at the moment The attitude of the crowd was unruly and that spirit of good humour and tolerance, which is normally characteristic of a Manipuri crowd – was not in evidence A short time later Mr Sharpe and I agreed that it might have a sobering effect if we were to post a platoon of the Assam Rifles on the road a short distance from the scene To avoid blowing the bugle and causing excitement I went to get this platoon myself I got as far as the bottom of the steps when the crowd would allow me to go no further Some women seized me by the coat and I had difficulty in getting back into the Telegraph Office Nothing particular happened for some minutes but the crowds were obviously getting more and more worked up

"At about 3 p m we saw Captain Stone with some sepoys enter the Telegraph Office compound This caused a certain amount of excitement among the crowd but there was no incident and Captain Stone was seen to withdraw his men to the Post Office compound next door At 3 15 p m I was looking out of a window in the back room of the office when suddenly the noise of the mob broke into an angry roar and I heard a crash I went into the front room where Mr Sharpe told me that they had started stoning We agreed that the compound should be cleared and the Assam Rifles called up I ordered the bugler to sound the Advance and Captain Stone s men immediately entered the compound and started to clear it Women surrounded them and *tried to snatch the rifles from their hands and men in the background threw stones* Some sepoys were hit and these stones also struck some women In some cases men had to use their butts to force their way through the crowd The compound was cleared in a few minutes and all the injured taken into the Telegraph Office and attended to under the direction of the Civil Surgeon Some five cases were later evacuated to the Civil Hospital

No further active incident on the part of the crowd took place but they were determined to wait there till they got their answer I feared that further trouble might occur when darkness fell and we learnt that the crowds were talking of wrecking the rice mills in the bazar Accordingly I sent Lieut Williams back to the lines to organize a Reserve there and to arrange for a strong patrol to visit the bazar at intervals Actually all was quiet there At 10 15 p m I was asked to frank a "Clear the Line" telegram to His Highness the Maharaja and did so Shortly afterwards the crowd began to disperse By midnight there were only a few die hards left and I considered it safe to withdraw the troops The order to stand down was given at 12 15 a m Guards for the night were left on the Telegraph and the Post Offices "

[*Diary* of J C F Stone (Captain), Assistant Commandant, 4th Battalion Assam Rifles, dated Imphal, 13th December 1939]

2.15 p.m. – "I received an urgent message from the Commandant I was in my *bungalow* and immediately went to him On arrival at his *bungalow* the Commandant told me that the President Manipur State Darbar and the Civil Surgeon were besieged in the Telegraph Office I was ordered to sound the alarm "

2.20 p.m. – "This I did on arrival at the Quarter Guard at 2 20 p m The Commandant arrived in his car, collected the bugler and proceeded to the Telegraph Office, saying that if troops were needed he would sound the bugle "

2.35 p.m - "When three platoons had fallen in, I moved two to the *Nala* and of the road running through the lines, and left the Subedar Major in Charge at Head Quarters

Magazines were charged and bayonets fixed, in accordance with Battalion Standing alarm orders."

2.45 p.m. – "When I got to the *Nala* at 2.45, I saw a very large crowd which I estimated at between 4000 and 5000 surrounding the Telegraph Office and the Commandant's car which was on the path inside the compound. There was a very considerable noise and I feared for the safety of those in the Telegraph Office."

2.50 p.m. – "However, as I had not heard a bugle blow, I did not feel justified in taking drastic action, but went with one platoon into the North part of the compound of the Telegraph Office which was then clear of people. A number of men on the road shouted what I understand to be *The Sepoys are coming, stop them.* We were soon surrounded by a horde of screaming women who ran from the East to the North part of the compound and in order to avoid incidents, I halted."

3 p.m. – "On representations from some reasonable people in the crowd that our presence was merely inflammatory, I moved the platoon to the Post Office compound, still within easy reach of the Telegraph Office, if the call should come "

3.15 p.m.–"A bugle sounded the Advance from inside the Telegraph Office, and I ordered the platoon to advance. Mr. Williams, who had arrived, accompanied me. Simultaneously No.2 platoon under Subedar Mangal Sing, advanced from the lines.

"There was considerable opposition, and a way had to be forced through the crowd On rounding the Northeast corner of the Telegraph Office, we were met with stone throwing, which increased in intensity as we got in front of the Telegraph Office Road metal, piled in front of the office provided a readily accepted arsenal.

"The crowd was gradually pushed back, and those on the verandah of the Telegraph Office were soon removed Stone throwing was going on all the time, and six people, including myself, were hit to my own knowledge. On a few occasions sepoys had to use the butts of their rifles to avoid having them snatched away by members of the crowd."

3.35 p.m. – "In a short time, the compound was cleared of all, except some injured people and their attendants. A cordon was placed round the compound of the Telegraph and Post Offices, and a third platoon called up as reserve Injured people were treated by the Civil Surgeon and Rai Bahadur Gangesh Chandra Das, and taken inside the Telegraph Office."

3.50 p.m. – "Rajkumar Bhaskar Singh (Judicial Member, MSD) arrived in his car at 3.50. His car had to be left on the road because of the crowd "

4.20 p.m. – "Mr. Sharpe, R.K. Bhaskar Singh and some other brought inside the compound three men, who appeared to be agitators. *Various members of the crowd, who claimed relationship with the injured people, were allowed to enter the cordon*

"From this time onwards there were no acts of hostility on the part of the crowd, though the troops were subjected to the threats, abuses and insults, usual on such occasions."

11 p.m. – "The night guards arrived and were shown sentry and alarm posts. It was carefully explained that the genuine public was in no way to be forbidden access to either Office. The crowd had all this time been thinning out, and by 11 p.m. not more than

1000 people were left These were mostly women who were all sitting down Some had lighted fires to keep warm "

12.15 a.m. – "The President, Manipur State Darbar, went to his *bungalow* The crowd now dwindled to about 300 also dispersed quite peacefully"

[*Report* of H.M. Williams, Lieutenant, Assistant Commandant, 4th Battalion, Assam Rifles, dated 13th December 1939]

"At 2 50 p m approx on the 12th December 1939, I was in my garden when my orderly came to report that the alarm had been sounded I cycled through the barracks opposite the gate of the Post Office, arriving about 2 55 p m Two platoons were drawn up here and Subedar Mangal Sing reported that the Commandant, the Civil Surgeon and the President, Manipur State Darbar were in the Telegraph Office The entire compound of the Telegraph Office was packed with a crowd mostly of women Those near the building were making considerable noise Captain Stone with one platoon was in the compound of the Post Office and a small crowd on the road opposite them I crossed the road and joined Captain Stone at about 3 5 p m The crowd appeared to be getting more excited and at 3 15 p m approx the Commandant's Bugler sounded the Advance from the Telegraph Office

"Subedar Mangal Sing's platoon advancing from the direction of barracks, and Jemadar Indralal's platoon from the Post Office with Captain Stone and myself, proceeded to clear the Telegraph Office compound Men in the crowd, who kept behind the women, threw some bricks and stones Captain Stone, one Gurkha Officer and several sepoys were hit and a number of rifles damaged by this stoning The sepoys exercised great restraint in dealing with the crowd, but some six or eight persons were slightly injured by rifle butts and stones thrown by their fellows The compound was cleared by 3 35 p m approx and a cordon formed round it The Civil Surgeon and his staff attended the injured From this time the crowd began very gradually to disperse

"A crowd gathered about 8 p m at the corner behind the Civil Surgeon's *bungalow*, and I posted a standing Patrol to watch this in case any attempt was made to enter the cantonment area This crowd prevented lorries leaving or rice-carts entering Imphal, but were on the whole orderly By midnight this crowd had dwindled to 20 or 30 persons Patrols at midnight found no signs of crowds gathering or any disorder "

[*Report* of Major P.H Cummins (I M.S.), Civil Surgeon, Imphal Civil Hospital, dated 16th December 1939.]

"On 12-12-39 I went to the Darbar Hall at about 10 30 a m to arrange for an appointment with the Medical Member of the Darbar and the State Accountant On my way to the Darbar Hall I found the road packed with people and many bullock carts I had to leave my car opposite the Telegraph Office. The door of the Darbar Hall was closed and there was a large crowd of people (mainly women) in the compound The Medical Member came out and we arranged for an appointment at 11 45 a m

"On returning at that hour the crowd was still present but the door of the Darbar Hall was open On entering I met the President, Manipur State Darbar and the Medical Member The President informed me that the women at the door would not allow him to leave unless he gave an order for the stoppage of rice export He

said that a telegram was being typed to send to His Highness on the matter After my interview with the Medical Member and the State Accountant I left the Hall I had some difficulty in getting away owing to the number of women near the door I was allowed to proceed when some ringleaders among the women present made my identity known to the crowd

"At about 1 p m Rai Bahadur Dr Gangesh Chandra Das came to my office and suggested that I should go to see Mr T A Sharpe and advise him to stop the export of rice as a temporary measure Rai Bahadur appeared to be very worried and apprehended trouble I went with him to the Darbar Hall and we found Mr T A Sharpe in the main office Rai Bahadur told Mr Sharpe that he apprehended trouble unless the rice export was stopped at once Mr Sharpe said he could not give such orders He checked a long telegram to His Highness and when finished asked us both to accompany him to the Telegraph Office A large party of women escorted us and a way was cleared for us by a cordon of men wearing Gandhi Caps Everybody seemed friendly although somewhat excited

"On reaching the Telegraph Office, the crowd (mostly women) entered the compound and surrounded the office Rai Bahadur and Sarat Chandra Barua (Sub Deputy Collector) who was also present had a conversation with the women near the door Apparently they intended waiting for an answer to the telegram When Mr Sharpe wished to go to his *bungalow* for lunch they said that they also were without food When it was explained to them that a reply would take some time they did not appear to be satisfied Several men including one man wearing a Gandhi cap also came to the door and had conversations with Mr Sharpe The latter said he was willing to issue an order to the rice mill owners not to purchase paddy pending further orders The man in the Gandhi cap (who was later arrested) wanted the written order to be given to them which Mr Sharpe refused The crowd at this time was very noisy but not violent

At about 2 30 p m Major Bulfield with a Bugler arrived and informed Mr Sharpe that the Sub Inspector of the Agency Police had reported to him that we were besieged in the Telegraph Office Mr Sharpe was not anxious that troops should be called up A little later he asked Major Bulfield to arrange for some troops to march up and down the main road away from the crowd Major Bulfield then left the office but returned almost immediately and said he could not get through the crowd He wrote out an order and was about to send it when we noticed that some troops with rifles and fixed bayonets had arrived in the compound At this time the crowd became very noisy and excited The troops retired to the Post Office compound within a few moments of arrival This was about 3 p m

'A young man (apparently a student) came to the door and said in English, *Why have you brought British troops to beat our women?*' He was very excited and left immediately Very soon after another Manipuri youth struck the window with his hand near the operator I saw him being led away by *the man in the Gandhi Cap*

"At about 3 15 p m the same window was broken by a stone I then heard the alarm being blown by the Bugler who was in the back room with the Commandant I saw the troops advancing from the Post Office and they proceeded to clear the compound Several stones were thrown at them and I saw some Riflemen being hit by the stones I saw one woman throwing a brick, which a Rifleman warded off with his rifle The Riflemen used the butts of their rifles to push back the crowd *The compound was quickly cleared and I then saw several women lying on the ground of the compound* With the help of Rai Bahadur we gave first aid and had all cases removed indoors I sent for Dr Chaudhury (in-

charge), 4th Assam Rifles Hospital. He arrived at once with dressings and all cases were dressed

"*When it was dusk five cases of women were removed to the Civil Hospital None of the cases were of serious injuries Most of the injuries appeared to be caused by stones or some blunt weapon* I saw one case with a superficial incised wound on chest One Indian Officer and 7 Indian other Ranks and 21 women were treated "

[*Report* of Mr. T.A. Sharpe Esq., I.C.S., President, Manipur State Darbar on the happenings of 11th and 12th December 1939.]

11th December 1939: "At about 9 a m a crowd began to gather in my bungalow compound A little later I went out on to my office verandah and the crowd consisting of about 300 or 400, the majority being women, approached and one Mera Jatra of Mayang Imphal, who was apparently the spokesman of the party, asked me to pass an order prohibiting the export of rice He explained that the price of rice was very high and those villagers whose crops had been damaged in the recent floods were very hard hit I explained to the party that I had no power to issue such orders and that the matter would have to be considered at the next Darbar, which was due on the 13th December 1939 I told them that they should put in a petition stating their grievances

"Mera Jatra explained to the assembly which seemed quite amenable to reason The crowd waited in my compound until I proceeded to office when I was followed to the Darbar Hall A petition was duly filed, and I decided to call a special Darbar meeting for the following morning to consider the position This was explained to the crowd through the medium of Mera Jatra and the crowd dispersed saying they would return on the following morning "

12th December 1939: "A special Darbar met at 8 a m and a resolution recorded at 10 30 a m A crowd, which was considerably bigger than the deputation of the previous day, was gathered in the State Office compound reaching up to the main doors of the Darbar I told the S S O to get the resolution typed out and to prepare an express wire to His Highness the Maharaja I then decided to go to my *bungalow* and take breakfast while this was being done, but the crowd of women at the main door refused to let me go until they have received an order prohibiting the export of rice I explained that the Darbar had passed a resolution, which was being submitted by express wire to His Highness for early orders, but even then I was not allowed to leave the Darbar Hall In the circumstances I decided to dispose of some office work and accordingly did so

"*All the Darbar Members excepting Rajkumar Bhaskar Singh had now left the Darbar Hall* It would probably be about 11 a m when the Civil Surgeon came through the crowd into the Darbar Hall He stayed for a short time discussing medical matters with R K Bhaskar Singh and then managed to get away with a certain amount of difficulty through the crowd, which had now partly overflowed, into the Darbar Hall It was at this time that the Subedar Major, State Military Police, reported to me that a crowd of women had surged round the Quarter Guard and that the two Darbar Members (Lairenmayum Ibungohal Singh and Sanjenbam Nadiya Singh) had been confined I went with the Subedar Major to the Quarter Guard through the State Office, women pouring through the Darbar Hall in an attempt to follow me Several of them succeeded



Mr. T.A. Sharpe Esq.,
ICS, President, Manipur State Darbar

'I arrived at the Quarter Guard to find a large crowd of women folk and on asking for the Darbar Members the police unlocked a door of one of the rooms and the two Members were found sitting inside The crowd did not in any way attempt to obstruct us probably because they knew I was not trying to leave the office The two Darbar Members left me on my way back to the State Office and I later came to know that they proceeded to their respective offices

Arriving in the State Office I found that the telegram had been typed out and I signed it I told the crowd that I wished to send the telegram and I accordingly proceeded to my car which was standing just outside the Darbar Hall The crowd of women which completely surrounded my car refused to let me go and said that I would have to walk to the Telegraph Office I agreed to do so and attempted to walk towards the State Office gates but was prevented from so doing by the crowd the women near me catching hold of me Not wishing to suffer the indignity of losing my coat and possibly my trousers I beat a hasty retreat into the Darbar Hall I then explained to the members of the crowd nearest me that such obstruction would not help them but on the contrary would delay receipt of orders from His Highness They still persisted that I should give an order pending receipt of an order from the Maharaja The crowd at thi time though not aggressive was undesirably excited I retired to the State Office room to consider the situation the crowd by now overflowing through the Darbar Hall into the State Office

At this juncture the Civil Surgeon accompanied by Rai Bahadur came through he crowd into the State Office followed by I S O and his Head Clerk The general opinion was that the situation was deteriorating I added a few remarks to the telegram explaining to His Highness that there was a certain amount of agitation in Imphal and asked for an immediate reply The crowd was now more excited than before and demanded an order from me to stop the export and to forbid the Marwaris to buy rice I explained again that without His Highness s order no order could be given by me and that the sooner they allowed me to go the sooner the order would arrive

Finally they agreed to let me go to the Telegraph Office and I proceeded through the crowd followed by the Civil Surgeon *both of us arm in arm with two women* Everyone seemed quite cheerful and I was then under the impression that the situation was improving and that the crowd would be willing to wait for a reply It would probably be about 2 p m when I entered the Telegraph Office and handed in the telegram

After handing in the telegram feeling particularly hungry I told the women who were standing near the door that I would go to my *bungalow* and take my meal and then return and wait for a reply The crowd apparently discussed my proposal and I was told that as they themselves would have to wait for the reply without taking food there was no reason why I should not do the same They did not however interrupt some bottles of beer which successfully arrived inside the Telegraph Office

It was not long after we had entered the office that the crowd again renewed their demands for an immediate order and threatened that if no order was forthcoming they would themselves stop rice being sold to Marwaris and stop lorries from leaving Imphal The crowd had by now grown considerably and I received the impression that the crowd was being agitated by a new element I noticed several Gandhi Caps amongst the crowd at the back and attempts were now being made to force the doors and windows

"At this juncture the Commandant, Assam Rifles accompanied by the Sub-Inspector forced their way through the crowd and entered the Telegraph Office The Commandant asked me if I wanted troops, and I replied that for the moment I did not consider them necessary and their presence would probably make the crowd worse Later as the excitement amongst the crowd grew I suggested to the Commandant that he should march some troops along the road past the Telegraph Office to show the crowd that there was a force at hand if required I explained however that I did not want the troops to come into the compound or attempt to disperse the crowd Accordingly the Commandant attempted to leave the Telegraph Office but failed I then suggested that the Commandant should write a slip and send it *via* a messenger, who too failed to get away The time would be about 3 p m

"The situation was now getting fairly serious, and there was every chance that the Telegraph Office would be damaged In view of the fact that there was a possibility that no reply would come that day, and that the temper of the crowd would doubtlessly deteriorate as time went on, not wishing to use force and make matters worse, I agreed to go personally to the bazar and request the Marwari Mahajans not to buy rice or export until His Highness's orders had been received The crowd however turned down my suggestion and demanded that I should write an order and give it into their hands

"A little later I saw some Assam Rifles led by Captain Stone to the north of the Telegraph Office They did not attempt to enter the crowd but retired out of sight to the back of the office We continued waiting in the Telegraph Office with the crowd tightly packed round the office doors and windows I was still trying to reason with the women when the crowd began to throw stones - one stone smashing the glass of the door, another the window behind which the signaler was telegraphing In view of the situation I told the Commandant that troops should be called and stationed round the Telegraph Office The Commandant blew a bugle and shortly afterwards the Assam Rifles troops led by Captain Stone came round the front of the office, with rifles held perpendicularly Some women caught hold of the sepoys as they forced a way through the crowd and bricks were thrown The compound was eventually cleared and the sepoys took up position around the Telegraph Office compound

"The Civil Surgeon took charge of those persons complaining of injuries and they were taken inside the office I examined the injured persons and found that most of them had received minor injuries The Civil Surgeon prepared a list of all persons injured and treated them there and then The time would probably be 4 30 p m Bricks injured several of the sepoys - and it is highly probable that some of the injured were wounded by stones thrown by the crowd Relatives asking to see the injured persons were allowed to do so A lorry was arranged for those persons requiring hospital treatment and the remainders were allowed to go home

"At about 9 p m a man wearing a Congress Cap came up to the Telegraph Office and handed me a paper on which was recorded the proceedings of an emergent meeting of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha Working Committee ***I told this man that no one had received bayonet wounds and that most of the injured women had gone home and that four were being treated in the hospital*** I explained to him the unreasonableness of the crowd and he went off without a remark

"At about 12 p m I again went to the gate and talked with the women (by now most of the men had gone) and they said that I could go to my ***bungalow*** The spokeswomen were the two women who had earlier in the day escorted me from the State Office to the

Telegraph Office and were very reasonable and friendly. I came out on the road and chatted with the women folk who were still gathered there, and entered my bungalow. Before going I told the women that I would issue orders – immediately on receipt of His Highness's reply, and they agreed to wait!"

[*Report* – submitted by Bali Ram Das, Sub-Inspector of Police, Agency Thana, dated 15th December 1939.]

7th December 1939: - "Some bullock carts with paddy came to the bazar in the morning. The carters told the merchants that they would sell the paddy to them if they (Marwaris) agree to pay Rs.1/7/ per maund. The merchants purchased them first at Rs.1/7/; the second batch of carters sold the paddy to them at Rs.1/6/; and the third batch at Rs.1/5/."

8th December 1939: - "The carters came with their paddy-loads in the bazar as usual in the morning. The Marwaris asked the carters to sell the paddy to them. The carters told the merchants that if they agree to pay the price of previous day's rate they would sell. The picketers asked the carters not to sell the paddy to the *Mayangs* at the reduced rate. The carters were ready to sell the paddy to the bazar merchants, but they were forced by the picketers not to sell at the reduced rate and asked them to sell to one Tolchou Singh (Manipuri) and they accordingly left the bazar One of the picketers showed a *Parwana* to the carters but the merchants do not know the contents. That very night after 11 p.m. some carters with *Chira* came to the bazar but some 150 women forced the carters to leave the bazar with their carts. [Sic.]"

9th December 1939: - "The carters came with their paddy and sold to the merchants at the rate of Rs.1/5/ per maund. Afterwards, the women appeared in the bazar and the carters left the bazar soon."

10th and 11th December 1939: - "The carters came to Imphal with their paddy-carts; but the picketers did not allow the carters to sell them in the bazar"

12th December 1939: - "The carters were dragged back from the road towards the Darbar Hall. The women turned out the labourers from the godowns of the Marwari merchants. When I came to office I saw some gathering in front of the Sate Office by men and women When I met Rai Bahadur on the road he said that there were large gatherings and that two Darbar Members have been kept in the State Military Line.

"Hearing several *golmal* I thought it wise to report the matter to the P.M.S.D. I sent the report to the President who asked me to inform the Political Agent immediately by lorry. I then deputed my A.S.I. with a Constable to go to the Political Agent at Sugnu who did leave with a lorry…I hastened to the Post Office but seeing the gathering so large I went direct to the Commandant, 4th Assam Rifles and reported the situation of Telegraph Office. When we were inside the Telegraph Office the gathering began to throw stones on the glass of the windows and doors of the Telegraph Office. I found some women and Assam Rifles men injured who were being dressed by Doctors inside the Telegraph Office. The Civil Surgeon asked me to get a lorry to remove some patients to the Civil Hospital. After dark, 5 (five) injured women were removed to the Civil Hospital. *Some nine instigators who asked the women to go ahead of the mob and create disturbances were arrested and released on bail.*[5] When I left after 1 a.m. there were 50 or 60 women in front of the Telegraph Office."

(II)

Statements of the Witnesses (including the five Manipuri women) who were all present at the occurrence, and the Civil Surgeon's Injury Report

Rai Bahadur Gangesh Chandra Das Retired Assistant Surgeon, dated Imphal, 15th December 1939 —"I went to Babupara on the 12th December to treat a patient On the way back I found a big crowd collected round the Darbar Hall I went to the Hospital and saw Major Cummins, and went back to the Darbar Hall with him The President wrote out a telegram to His Highness, went towards the Telegraph Office and we accompanied him The crowd came with us They were mostly women, but some men The President handed in the telegram and we talked to the crowd and tried to pacify them The President agreed to order the *Kayas* not to buy paddy for some days

"There was a consultation and a few minutes later some sepoys arrived and stood in the Telegraph Office compound on the north of the building Suddenly stones were thrown Then I saw the troops pushing back the crowd They were pushing back the women with their rifles held straight in front of them The crowd threw large numbers of stones Some women fell to the ground Major Cummins and I gave first aid and then brought them in *I do not think that a bayonet could have caused any of the injuries The wounds were bruises There were some cuts which might have been caused by stones or blows with a blunt weapon I should not describe any of the injuries as serious*

"When the troops came, the women did not go away The women said Why have the troops come? We have come to utter our grievances and not to injure any one After the troops came the position appeared to me serious and dangerous

"I do not think any of the injuries were serious, but as I only rendered first aid and did not treat the cases later I cannot be certain Absolutely no provocation was given by the troops They stood entirely peacefully until given orders to remove the crowd '

Sarat Chandra Barua Sub-Deputy Collector, dated 14th December 1939 – "On the 12th December I was at the Land Revenue Office I saw a crowd and heard shouting at the Darbar Hall The Civil Surgeon, Rai Bahadur myself and my Head Clerk went out and got through the crowd to the President in the State Office The crowd seemed to get more excited and when the Commandant tried to get out of the Telegraph Office the women pushed him back Some time after I saw some troops coming from the north to the compound of the Telegraph Office I saw from the window of the room that the women were shouting and making threatening gestures to the troops They were almost touching the troops Captain Stone quietly removed the troops to the adjacent Post Office compound

" The troops re-entered the compound and began to push back the crowd They held their rifles straight up in front of them Bayonets were fixed Some of the crowd ran away to the streets outside the compound Others had to be pushed back The first casualty I saw was an Indian Officer who was bleeding on the forehead from a tone thrown Some women fell to the ground in the compound, and I personally carried 3 (three) into the Telegraph Office building The Civil Surgeon took charge of the wounded and first aid was given *The injured women were about 22 in number*

"The relations of the wounded were admitted to see the injured persons!"

Dr. Lalit Chandra Bora· Sub-Assistant Surgeon, dated 14th December 1939 – "On the 12th December I heard that there had been a row at the Telegraph Office and that some people had been injured That was just at 4 p m I found 21 Manipuri women who had been injured Rai Bahadur and Dr Chaudhuri had already given first aid Major Cummins also was there None of the injuries appeared serious Five of the cases were taken to Hospital under the Civil Surgeon's orders The other injuries were not serious enough to take to Hospital and they all went home

"I examined all the cases personally A bayonet might have caused one wound It was only a skin abrasion and was certainly not caused by a bayonet thrust, but might have been caused by the edge This case did not go to Hospital I am confident that a bayonet could have caused not one of the other wounds The records were prepared at the Telegraph Office at the time "

Angom Hiramani Singh Head Clerk, Civil Surgeon's Office, dated 15th December 1939 – "About 3 10 p m I was on my way from the office to take my food I saw a big crowd near the Telegraph Office There were both men and women standing on the road I saw some men of the Assam Rifles, some women and some officers including the Civil Surgeon I did not see any stone throwing, nor did I see the crowd being removed from the compound Under the Civil Surgeon's orders I made a list of the injured troops and injured women The list of the injured women was handed over to Dr Lalit Chandra Bora I helped them to get their relatives to interview the injured in the Telegraph Office "

[The statements of Upendra Chandra Mukherjee, Sub-Post Master (S P M) Imphal and Sashindra Chandra Chaudhuri, Telegraph Signaler, which were recorded on the 15th December 1939 were less significant and the gist more or less the same]

[Statements dated 14th December 1939 of the five Manipuri women, who were detained in the Imphal Civil Hospital for some days]

Ngangbam Ongbi Angangjaobi, Wangkhei Khunou "While I was standing in front of the Telegraph Office for protesting against the export of rice and for stopping rice mills some sepoys came forward and injured me by bayonet I cannot say whether one or more sepoys hurt me by bayonets I fell down on the ground Some medical help was given to me and I cannot say what happened afterwards I am now being treated in the hospital

"The sepoys did not ask us to clear the road, we were standing in line and the sepoys suddenly attacked us and hit by bayonet No body pushed me from back towards the sepoys We were standing silently but the sepoys came forward and began to beat us We did not attack the sepoys I have got only one injury on my forehead "

Wangkheimayum Thambal, Singjamei Makha, Khetri Leikai "I have got hurt on the right side of the abdomen This is due to beating by the sepoys by the butt of gun The sepoys ordered us to clear up the road and when I was running through fear a sepoy came forward and beat me by the butt of his gun I fell down senseless and cannot say what happened next I have got no other injury I did not disobey sepoys' orders and did not attempt to obstruct them "

Khaidem Ongbi Tolhaibi, Nongmeibung "A sepoy beat me on my head by his gun butt I have got injury on my head We were standing on the road for protesting against rice export &c The sepoys rushed towards us, did not ask us to clear the road but suddenly attacked us and beat us I got senseless and fell on the ground and do not know what happened next No body pushed me from behind and caused my falling down I fell down due to the beating of the sepoy"

Khumukcham Ongbi Yaimabi, Nongmeibung "I have got injury on my forehead and on some parts of my body The butts of the gun beat me and the sepoys also kicked me when I fell down I did not hear whether the sepoys ordered us to clear the road as we were standing behind On the presence of the sepoys we got afraid and while running through fear the sepoys attacked us and beat by the butt of gun and kicked us'

Laırik Yengbam Chaobi, Lairik Yengbam Leikai "I followed the village women who went to protest against the export of rice and while standing on the road near the Telegraph Office the sepoys attacked us and beat me I cannot say whether I was beaten by the butt or bayonet as I got senseless and fell down I have not heard whether the sepoys ordered us to clear the road I have got injuries in two places near my right eye I was beaten in some parts of my body also by kicks &c"

Major P H Cummins (I M S), the Civil Surgeon put up the *Injury Reports* sustained by the five women who were admitted to the hospital on 12th December 1939, after the affair near the Telegraph Office Actually L C Bora, the Medical Officer of the Imphal Civil Hospital noted the reports on 12th December at the place of occurrence It seemed significant that the facts as revealed in the *Medical Reports* were not in conformity with the statements given by the injured women *But it was not true that no one was allowed to visit the women* Not only their relatives but others as well had visited the women since they were brought to the hospital The steps that were taken only were - not to allow undesirable persons to get in and overcrowding at a time [6]

INJURY REPORTS

Ngangbam Ongbi Angangjaobi, Wangkhei Khunou Examined on 12th December

1 One abrasion ¼" x ½" on the outer end of the left eyebrow – simple in nature and caused by blunt weapon

Wangkheimayum Thambal, Singjamei Makha, Khetri Leikai Examined on 12th December

1 One bruise 2" x 1" on the right costal margin at the level of the 9th rib – simple in nature and caused by blunt weapon

Khaidem Ongbi Tolhaibi, Nongmeibung Examined on 12th December

1 One bruise 1" x ½" on the middle of the frontal part of the head 3" above the scalp hair line – simple in nature and caused by blunt weapon

Khumukcham Ongbi Yaimabi, Nongmeibung Examined on 12th December

1 One contused wound 1½" x ¼" on the middle of the front part of the head 2½" above the scalp hair line – simple in nature and caused by blunt weapon

2 One bruise ½" x ¼" on the outer end of the right eyebrow simple in nature and caused by blunt weapon

Lairik Yengbam Chaobi, Lairik Yengbam Leikai Examined on 12th December

1 One contused wound ½" x ¼" on the outer end of the right eyebrow simple in nature and caused by blunt weapon

2 One contused wound ½' x ¼" at the outer angle of the right lower eye lid simple in nature and caused by blunt weapon

It was thought that all provocations came from the crowd and that the British Officers were constrained with great forbearance The women and the Manipuris in general seemed well disposed towards Mr J A Sharpe But one cause of irritation was that several men of the Assam Rifles were Kukis and the Manipuris did not like being pushed about by men of their inferior hill tribes Mr Gimson learnt this fact from a hint given by the Maharaja But it could not be helped as the Kukis were all mixed up with the Gurkhas and others in all platoons

Things were a little quieter by the last week of December 1939, but the women had still continued to stop carters coming to the bazar with rice or paddy Meetings were held at many places, and there were still signs of turmoil *No one seemed to know what the women really wanted and it was doubtful that they knew themselves* Mr Gimson firmly believed that the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha actually tried to make some capital out of the agitation, and they too helped in the organisation At bottom the upheaval was certainly economic in character, and that it was really run by the women crowd only

His Highness the Maharaja did not do anything and that he did not mean to[1] Maharaj Kumari Tombi Sana, his daughter of whom he was very fond, was fallen ill again with tuberculosis, and the Maharaja made that an Excuse for not seeing any of the deputations from the public The women openly said that *all the Maharaja was after was money from the Imphal Marwari merchants*

On 28th December 1939 some carters came to sell rice to the Marwari merchants in the bazar in the British Reserve The women crowd

seized them and took the carters to the State *Thana* and had thrown some of their rice in the gutter. The carters made complaints to the Political Agent who ordered the carts to be brought to his *Thana* and handed over to the carters. He also ordered his Police to take up a case. The Assistant Sub-Inspector of the Agency *Thana* asked the State Police to produce the women accused (5 of whom were named) so that he could record their statements. Thus on the next day (29th December), the State Police called the women in a crowd (very foolishly); but the crowd refused to produce the five women in public and said they (accused) would all give their thumb impressions. This happened at dusk of the 29th.The crowd made strong protest saying that the Inspector of the State Police (Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh) had caught hold of one of the women crowd, slapped and kicked her and that a Brahmin woman was knocked down without mercy. Actually the Inspector of Police was secretly confined in the State *Thana* and the Police Member was also there.[7] The women crowds were all round the *Thana* Office and they immediately demanded a *BICHAR* and the BLOOD of the Inspector. While the women were thus in an ugly mood again Hs Highness the Maharaja went away for three days on a SHIKAR EXPEDITION! Mr. Gimson promised to the crowd that he would send a messenger to the Maharaja at once and ask him to come back to hold a *Bichar*. The women demanded a *Bichar* by the Political Agent and said openly that they did not want any decision made by the Maharaja, as he was the Marwaris' Maharaja and not theirs. The women said that the Maharani ordered them to stop the carters from selling rice to the Marwari merchants. It was quite certain that the women had lost confidence in His Highness, because he lately refused to receive a deputation from the public after promising to do so.

The Political Agent however refused to hold any *Bichar* that night (29th December), because he felt sure that if the Inspector came out of the *Thana* Office the women crowd would have tried to kill him. Technically the State *Thana* was in the British Reserve, which made things rather awkward. Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh, the second son of His Highness was the Police Member as well as an Ordinary Member of the Manipur State Darbar and he asked the Political Agent not to bring in the Assam Rifles to which the latter agreed. During the night, both Mr. Gimson and the Police Member did not get any help from the President of the Darbar who had gone out to Yairipok, 14 miles away, after he received news in the morning that the women there had burnt all the goods of Manipuri shopkeepers. Later at 10 p.m. the women crowd had dispersed and the Inspector of Police (Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh) was hidden

away somewhere. The women actually threatened to kill the Inspector next day on 30th December. The Political Agent advised the Police member to send the Inspector away for a few days under cover![8]

His Highness the Maharaja came back from his *Shikar* Expedition on 30th December, and immediately it was arranged that if the injured women (if there were any!) had actually filed a petition to the Darbar, they would hear their cases. When a crowd of about 1,000 women came to see the Political Agent in the afternoon of the 30th and said they wanted a *Bichar* by the Political Agent, they went away quite peacefully when the Political Agent told them to file a petition to the Darbar. It was important to note that during the last days of the month there appeared some local opposition to the crowd of women – but not yet important enough to be effective!!

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER NINE

Occurrence at the Telegraph Office on 12th December 1939

1 The petition filed by 31 members of the public to the Political Agent was dated 13-12-1939 and the leading signatories were Moirangthem Chandra Singh (Khongman), Angom Angou Singh (Leisangthem Leikai), Yumnam Lakshman Singh (Khurai Lamlong) Adhikari Mayum Hiranya Garbha Sharma (Thangmeiband), Chongtham Ibobi Singh (Heirang-goi Thong), Langpok Lakpam Abir Singh (Pishum Maning) et al The charges alleged in the application were that

A] Some 2,000 Manipuri women had gone to the State Darbar on 11th December and requested to stop the export of rice,

B] P M S D had announced that a written order would be issued at 8 30 a m on the next day (12th),

C] A large number of women had come to see the order, and at about 1 30 p m the President took the crowd of women to the Telegraph Office to let them know the urgent message which he had wired to His Highness the Maharaja

D] The President's order was conveyed by a bugler at which the Assam Rifles troops under a Commandant had suddenly appeared and at least 20/25 innocent and unarmed women were knocked down with violent bayonet charge Three or four women were on the verge of death, and

E] No relatives and no males were allowed to attend the injured women, and 'nine people' who had tried to look after the injured were illegally arrested and were again released on bail with fine of Rs 50 each See contra Bali Ram Das *Some nine instigators who asked the women to go ahead of the mob and create disturbances*

were arrested and released on bail Bali Ram Das, Sub-Inspector of Police, Agency Thana, 15th December 1939

2 Confidential No 3872 G.A., dated Imphal, the 26th December 1939 from C Gimson Esq, I C S, Political Agent in Manipur to the Secretary to the Governor of Assam, Shillong

3 Op Cit

4 See letter No 2014/IV-18 (B), dated 13th December 1939 from the Commandant, 4th Battalion, Assam Rifles, Imphal to the Political Agent in Manipur

5 Rf to "Petition" dated 13th December 1939, submitted to the Political Agent, Manipur, sig, Moirangthem Chandra Singh, Angom Angou Singh, et al

"পুং ১/২ তাবা মতমদা টেলিগ্রাম তৌবিগনি নখোযসু বা তাজবো হায়না টেলিগ্রাম অফিসদা পুবিবগা ডবল খোঙ্দুনা আসাম রাইফল কৌবে অদুগা কামান্দেন্টগা কোম্না শংগিন পাযবা সিফাই লাক্নুনা নুপী ২০/২৫ বোম অসি শংগিননা থিছুবিবে। নুপী ৩/৪ দি হিংবা শিবা খণ্ডদ্রে হাযনৈ। পাউ অসি তাদুনা ননাই ঐখোয় মপা মচানচিংব নীপা চঙ্জকবদা নীপা অমত্তা চঙহনবিদ্রে। খণ্ডদদুনা চঙলুবা নীপা ৯ সু ফাদুনা থল্লগা জামিন লুপা ৫০ দা থাবিবকই।"

6 Letter No 3217 from Major P H Cummins, I M S, Civil Surgeon, Manipur to the Political Agent in Manipur, dated Imphal 14th December 1939

7 Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh was the Police Member He was an Ordinary Member of the Manipur State Darbar and he took over the charge of the Civil Police from R K Bhaskar Singh on 21st November 1939

8 Confidential letter from C Gimson, Political Agent of Manipur to J P Mills, Secretary to the Governor of Assam, dated 29th December 1939

CHAPTER TEN

(I)

It was not an Agitation of the Women but a Movement of the People -Irabot (7th January 1940)

The arrest of Sri Irabot Singh President of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni point to another direction of the MASS AWAKENING in the State These are symptomatic of the times – *Hindusthan Standard* (Calcutta) 15th January 1940

The main bazar in the British Reserve was boycotted during the early days of January 1940, and meetings were held in the Police Bazar Men now began to take a more prominent part in the agitation, which was said to have been fanned by an old prophecy that *the appointed time had come for the arrival of a New Maharaja riding on a white elephant* The Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha took advantage of the unrest and suggested that their leader was the rider of the prophecy A particularly violent speech on 7th January 1940 however, had caused his arrest and the continued agitation led the Manipur State Darbar on 13th January to forbid meetings in the Police Bazar

A large meeting was held that night (13th January) in defiance of the Darbar s orders and a crowd which assembled next day (14th) had to be dispersed by the State Police assisted by a posse of hastily recruited commoners The success of the *lathi* charges had a steadying effect and the women whose interest had gradually waned as the men joined in and who by this time were no longer very clear as to what the agitation was all about had themselves split into two opposing factions But it was not for over a year that the main Imphal bazar was again fully occupied

His Highness the Maharaja had stopped the rice export and the rice milling system for some time, but the other demands of the public were not given due attention On the other hand, the Political Agent left all the urgent matters of the State to His Highness, and the latter on his part did not take up any prompt action to satisfy the demands The helpless publics were in utter confusion because even after repeated requests made to His Excellencies the Viceroy and the Governor of Assam they did not show any favour by preparing to interfere in the

administration of the Manipur State The public wanted them to institute a *Special Tribunal* to inquire into the matters and to decide the pending cases The Manipur State Darbar on the other hand, tried to decide the cases against the objection of the women mass who did not desire to see the partial and anti-prudent decision of the Darbar Members who were already declared *Unworthy* and *Unfit* of administration by the mass It was openly stated that the Maharaja and the Political Agent were not interested in forming a Tribunal to decide the cases The general public of Manipur, therefore, made the following demands from His Highness the Maharaja and the Political Agent for urgent consideration

1 To stop the export of rice till the next harvest as there was every fear of meeting a famine due to want of food

2 To stop the rice milling system completely which had eaten up the small earnings of the women from *dhan* husking

3 To decide the case of bayonet charge which caused severe wounds to 5 women and slight injuries to 20 women [An old woman of 70 years of age received wounds from bayonet charge and she had not come back to her proper sense]

4 To remove the sitting Darbar Members who were found unworthy for administration and to replace them by new Members through election

5 To remove the State servants in the Police Department who were all untrained and found unfit for administration

6 To establish a *Legislative Council* (on the nature) as already claimed by the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha the scheme of which was submitted to His Highness as asked for through his Private Secretary

7 To decide the case of Tongbram Sabi Devi who was assaulted by the Inspector of Police (Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh) by snatching her from the crowd and giving her two slaps with a kick by leather boot on her chest

8 To decide the case of 10 (ten) Manipuri women who were imprisoned for one month on the charge of picketing by direction of His Highness

9 To decide the case of one Oinam Ibemhal Devi who was assaulted in an inhuman manner by the Police Member (Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh) the second son of His Highness by kicking her in the 'private parts and thereby causing bleeding for several days She remained in the Civil Hospital for several days under the medical treatment of the Civil Surgeon

10 To decide the case of causing unnecessary assault to the innocent crowd on 14[t] January 1940 thereby giving injuries to 40 women and some men and

11 To decide the case of 9 leaders of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni who were arrested out of the processionists on 28[th] January 1940 and detained in the Police custody more than 24 hours without informing the charge on which they were arrested

Measures were taken up by the Manipur State Darbar to deal with the women's agitation in the rural areas where the women had prevented the despatch of paddy and rice to Imphal Bullock-carts

carrying paddy or rice were obstructed by the villagers on their way to Imphal, and the bazar dealers in rice or paddy were urged not to make any transaction Police and armed forces were sent to many villages to release all the carts carrying paddy, which were being held up by the women villagers At least 10 women of the Imphal area were sentenced to one month s simple imprisonment for obstructing the bullock-carts while proceeding towards Imphal with loads of paddy The circumstances under which the women were convicted and imprisoned were as follows

On the night of 3rd January 1940, some women had found cartloads of rice coming from a certain village They suspected that the rice was meant for export and therefore they asked the cart men not to sell the commodity to dealers but to the Manipuri women Next morning, Mr T A Sharpe, President of the Darbar and Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh, the Police Member appeared on the scene with a number of Constables and arrested ten of the women[3] who were later tried at a special Darbar meeting and were given sentence A petition on behalf of the accused women was, however, submitted to the Political Agent representing to him the facts about the imprisonment of the ten women It pointed out the hurried way in which their trial was conducted and the manner under which they were put into the jail The women strongly urged that 'it was not desirable at all that the cases of the women should be tried by the Darbar' The general feeling of the public was apparently clear that if the State authorities had resorted to repression by refusing to give generous consideration to the demands of the State subjects, the Government would be guilty of extreme foolishness

One Soibam Mera Singh and other eight persons from the Changang gei Malom and the Nambol area had actually complained to His Highness the Maharaja and the Political Agent against the ten accused women on the charge of obstructing their paddy-carts while going to the main bazar at Imphal The charge against the ten women was framed under Section 143 of the *Indian Penal Code* and the Darbar s order was issued on 4th January 1940 with an interval of a 'few hours only between the time of complaint and the issue of judgement' The prosecution story was that the accused women stopped the nine carts carrying rice while coming along the Keisampat road The carters were asked by the women to sell the rice to them at Rs 1/12/ per maund The carters refused as the price was too much low at which the women together with some others told the cart men that they could not proceed The women also threatened that unless the carters accepted the price of Rs 1/12/ the women would scatter

the rice in the road and beat the carters The judgement Order was read as follows (4th January 1940).

" The ten accused persons had wrongfully restrained the carters, the accused took an active part in the restraint, and as there were more than five persons involved, the ten accused formed an unlawful assembly, the common object of the assembly having to wrongfully restrain the carters

"The Darbar unanimously found all the ten accused persons guilty of being members of an 'unlawful assembly' under Section 143 of the *Indian Penal Code*, and sentence them all to 1 month imprisonment"

On 7th January 1940, a meeting of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni was held in the afternoon at the Police Bazar field under the Presidentship of Irabot Singh About 2,500 persons, including a big number of women, attended the meeting and in it Irabot spoke on the poverty of the masses, the sufferings and persecution of the Manipuri women in particular Resolutions were passed, and in the meeting it was decided to approach His Excellency the Governor of Assam for urgent redressal of various grievances of the public The resolutions again emphasized the previous *11 point charter of demands'* which were already submitted to His Highness the Maharaja and the Political Agent [4]

"In view of the increase in the price of food stuffs particularly of rice and paddy and of all commodities due to profiteering activities in Manipur and with a view to alleviate the impending miseries of the poor masses it is resolved that the State authorities be approached to stop exportation of rice from Manipur

"The State authorities be approached to provisionally close down the rice mills numbering 18 which have had an adverse effect upon the economic conditions of the poor masses, as they consume not less than 6000 maunds of paddy daily, thus throwing out of employment the masses who lived by husking

"The State authorities be approached to stop the Talkie Cinema which has adverse effect upon moral, material and the economic life of the poor State

'Resolved that the Sanmiloni will take necessary actions for the fulfilment of the *Unredeemed Demand* with regard to the reforms of the existing system of government made by the women of Manipur, which is also the demand of the masses [Sic]

"The people of Manipur requested the Political Agent for the administration of justice after proper investigation in connection with the 22 cases of the injured due to the charge of bayonets and rifle butts in the recent women demonstration The Sanmiloni resolves that His Excellency the Governor of Assam be approached for the formation of a *Mixed Tribunal* to investigate into the incident

' When the acute problem of food has stirred the people into agitation, and the taxes are still payable without fines, all coercive measures by sale of movables on the spot and even paddy from outside the barns by auction or otherwise is an unbearable act of torture to the people It is, therefore, resolved that the State authorities be requested to postpone the last date of payment for 3 months and allow the taxes to be paid in 4 instalments

"Resolved that the Sanmiloni do form a private *Investigation Committee* of the people in connection with the casualties due to the bayonet and rifle-butt charge The following gentlemen are nominated as members of the *Investigation Committee* The *Committee* should submit its report in two weeks

1 Akoijam Amubi Singha
2 Potsangbam Tomal Singh
3 Elangbam Tompok Singh
4 Hijam Irabot Singh "

Irabot Singh, who was the President of both the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni was arrested on a charge of sedition under Section 124A of the *Indian Penal Code* and was sentenced for a term of three years simple imprisonment (S I) in connection with the speech which he delivered at the meeting of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni at the Police Bazar on 7th January 1940 (above cited) The Manipur State Darbar Members were of the opinion that, Irabot, in the course of his speech made the following seditious remarks, that

1 ***The women who begged for rice had received bayonet points and rifle-butts instead;***
2. ***One handful of rice had been purchased at the price of two handfuls of blood,***
3. ***Rice export would not have been closed without the spilling of blood,***
4 ***The people should take revenge and remedy the wrong, and***
5 ***He exhorted the men folk to rise up, not to fear jail and take revenge for the blood of the Brahmini.***

The Darbar hurriedly decided whether or not such a speech was amounted to a seditious temper within the meaning of Section 124A of the *Indian Penal Code* In order to decide whether the speech had actually constituted an attempt to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection towards the Government established by law in the Manipur State, the Darbar in their argument set out in detail that it was to be considered from the standpoint of the type of persons to whom the speech was addressed to The time of delivery of the speech was also to be taken into consideration From the time of the Telegraph Office incident, the women of Manipur continued to remain in a very excited state and were persistently roaming round the town in large bodies breaking up bazars and literally screaming for a *bichar* in connection with the alleged bayonet attack on the crowd of women at the Telegraph Office The Darbar, therefore, maintained that Irabot's speech, which was a *gross misrepresentation of facts'*, was one, which would be highly successful in bringing into hatred and disaffection towards the State authority Hence he was declared "guilty" and was given imprisonment for a term of 3 years

The speech in question was actually an appeal to His Highness the Maharaja for redressing the grievances of the women by conceding an enquiry into the Telegraph Office incident, and a prayer to allow a constitution to the people of Manipur. The following extract would however indicate the original draft of the speech, which was delivered by Irabot on 7th January 1940.[5]

"...As a result of the sudden rise in the price of paddy in the harvest season the majority of the people are starving. The people have long been fearing an outbreak of famine this year as a result of the flood. That fear is now actually realized. The stoppage of the export of rice from Manipur is of considerable importance.

"Some people say if rice is not exported the people will not be able to pay taxes. The State is the people and that of the two – Food and Tax – food is by far the more essential one. If the people of Manipur die of starvation the State itself will be nowhere. Where then comes the question of taxation?

"Before the introduction of rice-mills in Manipur famines were few and far between. But we are now groaning under the pressure of famine all the year round. The lakhs of people who lived by husking paddy before the introduction of mills are to-day crying for the morning meal under millocracy. Thus the problem of unemployment that is taxing the brains of many political saints of India is gaining in volume at an alarming rate in Manipur. Of the 17 mills in Manipur one consumes 500 maunds of paddy per day, and none of them less than 100 maunds. The rice thus produced is exported from Manipur. Thus the mills have exported what is due to the hungry millions. The mill is an effective weapon for the millionaire to extort the morsel from the mouth of the ill-fed men.

"...The Rayats of Manipur and specially the women, our mothers, approached the President of the Darbar for the redress of their grievances. This is not for the benefit of any particular individual but for the welfare of the five lakhs of hungry stomachs. When the President, M.S.D. declared in the Telegraph Office that the Maharaja was away at Nabadwip, the women insisted on him to stop the sale of paddy to the mill owners, and on getting no favourable gesture from the President, the women crowd denied him passage.

"From this incident there arose a new demand for taking necessary actions in the 'name of justice' after proper investigation as to who gave alarm to the troops of the 4th Assam Rifles, and who gave orders for the charge of bayonet against the unarmed women.

"My Countrymen! It is impossible to describe the painful incident. Our mothers, no longer able to maintain us begged of the authorities for food and were replied with bayonets instead, which they faced with unexpected heroism. On the 16th December (1939) when I visited the Civil Hospital it broke my heart to hear the groaning of the wounded women...It is highly admirable that our men have observed complete non-violence even when their mothers and sisters were thus tortured and given insults."

According to His Excellency the Governor of Assam, the situation in Manipur was that the agitators made 'vague and sweeping demands', the Manipur State Darbar was side-tracked by His Highness and in any

case, the Maharaja showed no signs of desiring to support such demands as might be reasonable. The Maharaja was frightened, unreliable and lacking in tact in his dealings with the Darbar Members and his subjects. Many unexpected and forceful resistance had cropped up from the public, which showed signs of unhealthy deterioration both in the political and social life of the people.

On 13th January 1940, there was a large crowd of men and women at a meeting near the State Military Police Lines. After the meeting was over, several hundred people went to the British Reserve bazar and tried to get hold of Babu Kisturchand Seraoji who was alleged to have said:[6]

"In the next year I will buy up all the rayats in Manipur and feed them on paddy husks instead of rice."

It was not very certain whether Kisturchand had actually said any such thing or not, but when the Political Agent went to talk to the crowd they did not seem to be in a vicious mood. The people asked for Kisturchand to be produced but the Political Agent refused that. Kisturchand sent a chit saying that he had never made the remarks alleged, and if he had said anything offensive he asked for pardon. That seemed to satisfy most of the women and the Political Agent was able to persuade them to go away. The women again asked the Political Agent to promise to get rid of the Marwari merchants in a few months from Manipur, but he refused to give any such encouragement. Rumours were heard that there would be more gatherings at the public places and new demands would be put to the State authorities. His Highness the Maharaja did not wish to have any personal interview with deputations from the crowd; and instead he contacted the Darbar Members to explain important matters to the subjects. He wanted the people to approach to him or the Darbar in writing only for removal of their grievances in matters concerning the State, and to the Political Agent in matters concerning the British Reserve. The attitude of the Maharaja towards his subjects, particularly the agitators, was clearly revealed in one of his letters addressed to the Darbar Members:[7]

"I am afraid that there may arise cases in which the State authority will, under the painful necessity be compelled to take recourse to force in order to preserve peace in the State if the notified Orders be violated, *and there may also be some unfortunate victims to such undesirable force, amongst the ignorant Prajas I do not like that it should happen.*"

On 14th January (1940) a big meeting was held and speeches were made. The Darbar had already ordered on 13th January for all meetings not to be held and not to have crowds at public places. Mr. Gimson knew

in advance that the people would defy the Police and would march through the British Reserve. He, therefore, made arrangements to have the ways into the British Reserve held by the Assam Rifles troops, and told the State Police that he would keep the Assam Rifles in support in case of need. The meeting was held with some 8,000 people and then they started to march by the two roads to the British Reserve. The State Police held them up in spite of a fusillade of stones. Finally a *lathi* charge was ordered In his report of the incident on the same day the Political Agent wrote to His Excellency, the Governor of Assam:[8]

"I do not know whether any one was injured in the charge, but probably some were Before the charge was ordered 4 Military Police were injured with stones or *lathis* and 12 Civil Police received fairly serious injuries and 9 minor injuries The crowd had some swords or *daos* with them I personally saw one of the Military Police with a nasty scalp wound "

The military police under the orders of the Police Member (Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh) fired a few rounds into the air. For about 2 hours His Highness was with the Commandant of the 4th Assam Rifles and the Political Agent near the border of the British Reserve When they heard the firing they went forward to the State Military Police Lines The crowd which was now reduced to 500 or 600 at the time, had withdrawn and shouted from about 100 yards away. After about half an hour both the men and the women had dispersed Cries of **Bande Mataram** etc were raised, and it became apparent that the lead had now passed from the women to the men of the Congress group Women were put in the forefront at first; but most of them left before anything serious happened Mr Gimson asked the Judicial Member of the Darbar to prepare a detailed and accurate account of the events of 14th January for submission to His Highness who would publish the statement of what had happened The following was the verbatim report as prepared by the Judicial Member on the incident of 14th January at the Police Line bazar ground

"In the afternoon of the 14th (Sunday) two Members of the Darbar Foreigners and Registration and I were present at the *Thana* at the request of the Police Member When we were discussing what steps were to be taken if the members of Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni came and gathered in defiance of the Order of 13 January 1940 At about 3 30 p m the State Superintendent came to the *Thana* and handed an Order of His Highness (above cited) which he had just received About 4 p m some people were gathering in the *maidan* close to the Police Line bazar We all went to the spot Parties began to arrive from various directions with flags and shouting We entered into the crowd where we found the Subedar Major (S M P) who explained the two orders of His Highness's (14th) and the Darbar (13th) The leaders of the gathering did not pay attention to the contents of the Orders

"We tried to persuade the crowd to disperse and to make petition to His Highness We informed the crowd that undesirable consequences will arise to the innocent women if they insisted on going against the Darbar's order We told them that if any meeting was desired, they could petition the Darbar and His Highness Some of the leaders agreed, but still the crowd shouted that nothing had come out of the petitions already filed by them to the Maharaja, the Political Agent or the Darbar, nor the *Bichar* of the Police Inspector's assault of a woman and the bayonet charges at the Telegraph Office had taken up Some of the men shouted **Long Life to Irabot Singh**, and they observed a five-minute silence for Irabot Singh

"I called the Darbar Members outside and held a short meeting As the crowd began shouting slogans, and as some had mounted the parcel box, and between shouting, lectured we told the crowd to disperse in five minutes During these five minutes we withdrew our Constables from the crowd After five minutes we told the crowd to clear off the ground As some men tried to stop the crowd from dispersing we arrested one and in our attempt to arrest some more our men were pushed back Our men prevented some of the crowds who rushed towards the Jail, but the men at the back began to throw stones, wooden sandals and brickbats

One or two Constables rushed back without turbans and batons The men of the crowd rushed on us with long firewood and hurled at our men As the number of injuries on our side began to grow we had to withdraw our force In the meantime the Subedar Major went to the crowd and he tried to pacify and if possible to disperse the people But he came back with an injury on the cheek At 7 30 p m another attempt was made to disperse the crowd but without success

"Our men held their ground, but fell back shouting *Thang Paire Thang Paire* They actually saw some brandished swords in the crowd One sepoy sustained wound, which looked like that of a knife, and another bugler came badly wounded The Police Member fired pistol shots in the air which checked their rush Some of the men and women shouted *Sunda Kap pani Hotchallo* and charged us As the crowd were better armed by now while our men had only batons and short bamboo sticks our men were ordered back His Highness, the Political Agent and the Commandant of the 4th Assam Rifles with a detachment came at the sound of the alarm bugle

"The meeting broke off at about 8 p m and we returned at the *Thana*"

The Darbar Members came to see the Political Agent next morning (15th January) with a half-baked rumour that there would be another big meeting that night and the men would come armed with spears, bows, arrows and catapults At this, Mr Gimson leisurely advised the Maharaja to issue a proclamation calling on the loyal and saner elements to help in the preservation of peace and warning the disturbers that the Police would protect themselves and the others by all necessary means, even by firing if that should be necessary But he told the Darbar Members that they must not resort to firing if they could possibly avoid it The alleged plan of the malcontents was to send crowds of women to surround the Police and the magazine, and then the men would come behind with their weapons As the Maharaja became frightened of the proposed attack by the agitators, he asked through one of the Darbar Members if the Political

Agent would send a platoon of Assam Rifles to guard the Palace. But Mr. Gimson had no wish to isolate the platoons like that and *he promised that the Maharaja would be afforded protection in the Cantonment!*

Big crowds of men and women still continued to gather at various places (State Police Lines) but they did nothing in particular. Platoons of the Assam Rifles were always kept ready in reserve in case the State Police were found unable to hold their own during any unexpected emergency. The Political Agent heard that there would be a movement among the women to represent their grievances to His Highness the Maharaja in a constitutional manner "If they do that", Mr. Gimson recorded, "it will be up to His Highness to play his part, and he may do it, if he has been sufficiently frightened."

The Darbar Members came again to see the Political Agent in the morning of 16th January. They were extremely frightened about the situation and confessed that they could not get any trustworthy information from any one. There were all sorts of rumour and no one knew which to believe; probably the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni did not themselves know. The position was certainly ticklish, and evidently it was only the presence of the Assam Rifles on the evening of the 14th, which could prevent a much more serious affair. The Members asked the Political Agent if he would post some troops of Assam Rifles outside the British Reserve, because they could not trust the State Military Police, most of whom (according to the Members) did not even know how to load a rifle. Mr. Gimson replied that he could not in such conditions put the Assam Rifles in the State territory, where they would be either under the orders of a State Officer or under no orders. He expressed that he wanted to help them to maintain order and would see that the Assam Rifles were always ready in support; *but that they could be used only under the orders of the Political Agent*

So far there was no **battle** except that of the evening of the 14th January If the crowd were really determined they could have overwhelmed both of the State Military and Civil Police but it was doubtful whether they had any intention to go to such lengths. His Highness the Maharaja was now ready to grant an interview on the 16th (January) to some women and members of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha. Although it was thought probable that they would make demands to which the Maharaja could not accede, the Mahasabha, in fact, did not wish to go to extremes and did not want a violent conflict with the administration. The groups of women and the Mahasabha members did not meet the Maharaja on the 16th evening;

but they held a meeting to decide what to ask him to do, and at 7 p.m. the crowd had dispersed peacefully. The following was the draft-speech prepared by His Highness the Maharaja to be given on 16th January to the women mass and the Mahasabha members:[9]

"I have noticed the scarcity of paddy here, and accordingly arrangements have been made to stop **Red Passes** (Passes for export of rice for Battalion purposes outside Manipur). Let us see what can be done to give food to those who starve and to do something to remove want amongst my subjects.

"... ... People say that I have not done anything concerning the bayonet wounds. Let them furnish necessary materials and evidence and I will take up the case soon. They should not put me to shame saying I have done nothing in spite of four petitions filed by them to me in connection with the Inspector of Police. Upto this day no application has come to my hand. How can I do without an application? *If the woman, who is said to be kicked by the Inspector of Police is present here, please ask her if she filed a petition. None was filed. If one is filed, I shall try the case before my subjects publicly.*

"I urge that you will see to my prestige. Let the people be peaceful. I am sorry for the agitation amongst my subjects. I shall do what my subjects wish me to do. I am Maharaja because there are my subjects. Any time when your wishes are not fulfilled, please come to me. It is beyond the power of the Darbar and the State Courts to do anything "

(II)

Trials and Tribulations of the Manipuris. A General View of the Situation

12th December 1939: The trouble began with a demand for stopping the export of rice. The demand led to the riot at the Telegraph Office on the 12th December. There was no doubt that it was a "genuine economic demand". At first, the movement was carried on almost entirely by women, the men staying in the background. The export of rice was closed in September 1939, when fears of a shortage first appeared; and it was opened again only on 29th November when the new harvest was coming in. Realizing that export was likely to be closed again within a few months, the local Marwaris bought up the entire paddy they could find and exported the rice as fast as they could get it away. The result was that the price of rice rose sharply even before the end of the harvest. At the same time, it was found that the produce of the harvest season was less than it had been expected. The rise in price hit hard the inhabitants of the Imphal town as they did little cultivation and formed nearly a third of the population of the whole Manipur valley.

13th December 1939: The women's next move was against the rice-mills. This was also an economic agitation, because before the mills

were introduced the women used to make money by husking paddy for the merchants The mills had stopped all this source of income, therefore, the women were determined to close down the mills belonging to both the Manipuris and the Marwaris, and they extorted chits from all mill-owners that the latter would not work their mills

14th December 1939: In the afternoon a crowd of about 10,000 women marched to Mantri Pukhri where one of the biggest rice-mills was situated The crowd was angry and excited, but the women were restrained from doing much damage and they were finally persuaded to go away at about 9 p m after the main switches of all the mills were removed by an order of the Political Agent

That night the agitation had grown to a new demand for the early removal of all the foreign merchants from the State The excited women freely uttered threats of murder but on the next day some wiser counsels prevailed and there was comparative calm At this stage the men became more prominent, and there was no doubt that they helped in the organization of the earlier movements But the men took very little obvious part beyond throwing stones in the affray at the Telegraph Office

16th December 1939: His Highness the Maharaja returned from Nabadwip Unfortunately he was in mourning for his mother s death and was not in good health The Manipuris seemed to have lost confidence in him and many of the people said openly that his promises were worthless because he would not keep them and that he would side with the wealthy Marwaris and would not help his own subjects The Maharaja did not improve matters by keeping deputations waiting for long periods and then refusing to see them Meanwhile the Manipuris who wished to sell their rice to the Marwaris were forcibly stopped and other women assaulted some women who tried to sit in the bazar

28th and 29th December 1939: Many of the victims were too frightened to complain But some carters whose rice were scattered on the road made complaints to the Political Agent and gave the names of some of their women assailants When Mr Gimson asked the State Police to produce the women for an enquiry that led to another serious outbreak of disorder because the women refused to allow the Police to serve any summons They accused the Inspector of Police (Khomdram Thambou/Dhanachandra Singh) of ' assaulting one of them and of knocking down an old Brahmin woman' The women had actually besieged the Police Station for several hours trying to get at the Police Inspector The official report of the incident however set

forth that *the Brahmin woman was knocked down by the crowd as they had surged forward and she was not touched by the Inspector, and that the alleged assault committed by the Inspector was to catch hold of one woman by the hand when she was abusing him and preventing him from serving a summon* This had happened on the 29th December 1939.

30th December (1939) to 7th January 1940: Large meetings were held most afternoons or evenings in the State Police Bazar, which was near the State Military Police Lines. Some were attended only by men, some only by women and some others by both. Violent speeches were made with demands for the dismissal of the Darbar Members and the Inspector of Police The people appeared to have been excited by a prophecy which was contained in the old Manipuri books that after three months of turmoil a new Maharaja would come riding on a white elephant, and some believed that the signs pointed to Hijam Irabot Singh as the new Maharaja On 7th January 1940, Irabot made an aggressively defiant speech in which he urged the men to follow the lead of the women and *"to avenge the blood of the Brahmini"* i e , the woman who had been knocked down by the crowd on 29th December [10]

9th January 1940: Irabot was arrested on the day, but the women did not seem to take any notice of the arrest and there was not much excitement although Irabot's adherents of the Mahasabha and the Praja Sanmiloni were naturally agitated More meetings were held and gradually the excitement increased and defiance of authority was preached

13th January 1940: The Manipur State Darbar prohibited meetings in the Police Bazar but in spite of that, a large meeting was held that afternoon and it could not be dispersed as the Police had not sufficient force ready The Maharaja issued a proclamation telling that the Police would defend themselves and that, if necessary, the Military Police would fire[1]

14th January 1940: There was an assembly of a large crowd This time the Police, re-enforced by some volunteers were ready and after due warning they charged and dispersed the mob with *lathis* A part of the crowd had re-assembled and assaulted the Police with sticks and brickbats This was after dark Another *lathi* charge was made and the crowds were driven off at about 8 p m. Before the first *lathi* charge the crowd was estimated at 5,000 to 6,000, but after the charge it gradually melted to about 600 only From 5 to 10 p.m. Mr. Gimson had 3 platoons of the Assam Rifles in hand to support the State Police, if necessary, and

to *"prevent what might have been a victorious and blood-thirsty crowd from invading the British Reserve "*

The occurrence of the 14th led to all kinds of excited rumours The Darbar Members believed that a mass attack would be made on the Police with women in the van to hamper the Police and men armed with the local-made weapons [like bows and arrows, spears and catapults] and sticks behind So the Assam Rifles were arranged in a state of "immediate readiness" for the next three evenings The Police activities on the 14th brought a steadying effect on the public The bazar and the sale of rice and other vegetables were stopped completely The foreign merchants decided not to buy from or sell to the Manipuris for a month *But it was not very clear what much of the trouble was all about and it was doubtful whether many of the women had any clear-cut idea about the excited commotion*[11]

After the Speech of His Highness the Maharaja, given to the women mass on 16th January 1940, the first two petitions which were filed to His Highness were that of a "joint application" from the women and another of an individual petition from one Tongbram Sabi Devi, both of which were dated 19th January 1940 In the first, the women requested the Maharaja to fulfill the following demands [11]

1 A further enquiry into the 'bayonet charge at the Telegraph Office on 12th December 1939 [Although the women put the demand forward it was strongly believed that the members of the Mahasabha fostered it]

2 The complete stoppage of rice exports including the amount to the Sadiya and Kohima Battalions and to the civil population at Kohima [In the early stages the women had told the Political Agent that the Battalions could have what they needed but even then they wanted to stop the Kohima supplies It was suspected that the real objection was to the profit made by the Marwari merchants There was however a genuine fear of a shortage of rice in Manipur]

3 The permanent closing of all rice-mills in Manipur [As the local people did not eat milled rice these were stopped automatically when the rice export was closed Provided the women would husk rice when the export was open, the Political Agent did not object to the closing down of the mills *It meant a great loss to the Marwaris and more employment for the women mass So the demand was mainly anti Marwari*]

4 The dismissal of the Inspector of Police (Khomdram Thambou) on account of the incident of the 29th December [The demand was persistent *There is no justification for it I think the Inspector is a steady type of man neither hot headed nor oppressive* – C Gimson]

5 The removal of the Manipuri Darbar Members [At first there was no demand for the elected members Although the demand was set forth by the women, who did all the petitioning, it was strongly believed that the women were not really interested in it

Mr Gimson had also not a particularly high opinion of the Darbar Members, but better candidates were not easy to find]

6 To make an enquiry to find out the official culprit who gave orders to the military sepoys for beating the unarmed women

7 To release Hijam Irabot and Laishram Kulabidhu from the Police custody

8 To expel the families of Kisturchand and Seraoji permanently from Manipur

Mr Gimson remarked in his letter to the Secretary to the Governor of Assam (20th January) that, whenever possible 'Force' was refrained from dispersing the crowds, because women were always in a majority in the front That was the right policy and it had certainly emboldened the crowds in their defiance of authority The women had actually treated Mr Gimson personally with a tolerant consideration, and Mr T A Sharpe was, however, a new and inexperienced officer and the people did not take much notice of him He was personally popular But the other Darbar Members seemed to be out of touch with the people Two of them at least were to some extent mixed up with the Congress element and 'their bickering (under MacDonald's leadership) with the Maharaja had certainly tended to weaken the administration, even though they might have been right and His Highness wrong ' [C Gimson]

When His Highness the Maharaja returned from Nabadwip it was hoped that he would help to set things right But the task was too much for him and he did not come forward to give a lead The main causes of his **extreme unpopularity** with the public were

1 His big share in the out casting scandals,

2 His intrigues with the Marwaris about allowing or banning the export of rice, and

3 His avarice

A large party in Manipur refused to approach the Maharaja for redress because they could not believe in his promises The Political Agent also expressed that he too had lost all faith in the Maharaja There were signs that many people who backed the agitation in its early stage were now tired of it and probably frightened of the possible developments, and also that there were 'rifts' among the agitator themselves After a careful study of the developments Mr Gimson put the following remarks in one of his letters to the Governor of Assam [12]

"I feel doubtful whether sweeping constitutional reforms are either necessary or desirable *Manipur has no tradition of democracy and except among the Mahasabha and Congress adherents democratic institutions are not wanted at all* The women who have led the present agitation are not interested in constitutional reforms I do not see

any very grave objection to the election of some Darbar Members if that is thought desirable

It was already felt that there was a clear need for some administrative reforms in Manipur In this connection Mr Gimson noted the following briefly what he thought to be the most necessary reforms in the State in a democratic manner

1 An overhaul of the Courts of Justice These were generally dilatory and highly corrupt

2 A re organisation and strengthening of the Civil Police Skilled and active supervision was essential for this

3 An improvement in the Land Records Staff and methods For this extra skilled help was necessary

4 More help for the President of the Manipur State Darbar who had too much work to do and

5 His Highness the Maharaja had to give up direct charge of State Departments and *he should spend less time outside his State*

The difficulty was that the administrative reforms could not be carried out without introducing "Foreigners to see them through and that would be unpopular with the majority of the more *educated and influential Manipuris who thought that they were quite capable of running the show themselves*

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER TEN

"It was not an Agitation of the Women but a Movement of the People"

1 F F Lydall I C S PMSD *Administration Report of the Manipur State* for the year 1939 1940 Imphal printed at the State Printing Press 1943 pp 2 3

2 C f to No D 1306 P (A)/40 from the Secretary to His Excellency the Crown Representative Political Department New Delhi to the Secretary to His Excellency the Governor of Assam dated 1st April 1940 Enclosed Petition from Magha Singh Lalit Madhab Sharma et al Dated 21st March 1940

[Manipur Praja Sanmiloni]

The Manipur Praja Sanmiloni was formed on 19th December 1939 at the Police Line Bazar with the following people as office bearer *First President* (Hijam Irabot Singh) *Secretary* (Elangbam Tompok Singh) *Members* Laishram Kanhai Longjam Bijoy Takhelambam Ibotombi Heisnam Nitai Thockchom Angou Takhelmayum Amusclung Takhelmayum Bokul Maibam Kokngang Tensubam Lamphel Potsangbam

Tomal, Heigrujam Tomchou Keisham Bisharup Gurumayum Gourakishore Sharma Laikhuram Ibungohal, Karam Bidur and Hijam Shamu

3 Names of the ten accused women who were sentenced to one month s imprisonment Laishram Kaboklei Devi (Nambul Wangma Janmasthan) Chungkham Chaobiton Devi (Takhelambam Leikai) Khundrakpam Leibaklei Devi (Tongbra Bhabok Leikai) Keisham Loitang Devi (Sega Lambi) Monoharmayum Indumukhi Devi (Naga Mapal) Hajarimayum Chaonuhal Devi (Naga Mapal) Chingakham Ibemhal Devi (Nongmeibung) Sougrakpam Lakhi Devi (Kakwa Huidrom Leikai) Thangjam Ibemhal Devi (Wangkhei) and Pebam Chamu Devi (Uripok)

4 Resolutions of the Manipur Praja Sanmilanee (Sic) 7th Sitting on 7th January 1940 Sig E Tompok Singh Secretary Praja Sanmilanee dated 26th January 1940 copy forwarded to His Excellency the Governor of Assam

5 See Petition dated (Camp) Gauhati 16th January 1940 from Rajkumari Khomdon Sana to the Crown Representative Shillong enclosed Copy of the *Speech* by Irabot dated 7th January 1940

6 Cited in Confidential Letter from Mr C Gimson Political Agent Manipur to Mr J P Mills Secretary to the Governor of Assam dated Imphal 14th January 1940

7 Memo No 693 P II I dated Imphal the 14th January 1940 from Chura Chand Singh K C S I C B E Maharaja of Manipur to the Manipur State Darbar

8 Confidential Report from C Gimson Political Agent Manipur to Mr J P Mills Secretary to the Governor of Assam dated Imphal 14th January 1940

9 See translation of a Speech given by His highness the Maharaja of Manipur on the 16th January 1940 to the women subjects

10 The wordings ***to avenge the blood of the Brahmini*"** were not found in the original draft writing of Irabot s speech

11 The original petition of the women mass written in Manipuri and submitted to His Highness the Maharaja on 19th January 1940 was read as follows

''ননাই তোল্লবী প্রজা নুপী মখেনা শ্রীযুৎ মহারাজ ইবুংঙোগী শ্রীচরন্দা হংগৎচবির্বদি শ্রীযুৎ ইবুংঙোদি প্রজাগী শোল্লবা নুপী, অঙাং, ষণ, ব্রাহ্মণবু যোকপিবিবা ইবুংঙোনি।

''ননাই ঐখোয় পুন্নমক্না কুমসিগী ফৌগী মৰোং অসি পোইনুদা হোঁজন্না তাংশিল্লকপা মবমদগী চাবা ওক্তদুনা লাইবব পুজা ঐখোযগী চবা হেনগদবা ফিভমগী কিজদুন ষ্টেট দববাবদা লাওজকই, ঃযেং হুকুম খংহনগনি তাকপিবা মতুংইন্না হুকুম তাবা চৎচকই। দববাব মেম্ববশিংনা প্রজাদা মতিক চাবা (নিংবা থুংবা) বাহৈ তাকপিদবনি। মদুগী মতমদা মেম্ববশিং অসি লোম্নরা চেনখি, ছোট সাহেবতা ঙাইহৌই, খুদক অদুমক্তদা ননাই ঐখোয খবনা চৎতুন পুলিশ কোর্ট গার্ডতগী মেম্বব ২ থেংনজকর্বনি। ষ্টেট দববাবগী শংদা ছোট সাহেবগা মেম্বব ২ গা পুল্লবা মতমদদি সাহেব অমম্ভু লাক্লে মদুদগী ছোট সাহেবনা টেলিগ্রাম অফিস তান্না পুবিবগা পল্টনগী সিপাই মযাম নোংমৈ সাঙ্গিন হাপ্তুনা লাকই। মখোয়না ননাই নুপীশিংবু সঙ্গিন্না অমসুং নোংমৈগী তোকনিংনা থিনবগী ঘটনা থোকহনবিবে।

''মতুংদা মসিগীদমক ননাই ঐখোয়না শ্রীযুৎ মহাবাজ স্না চবনবু খুকমজগে চৎচবদা লমখাংদা থৎতুনা সাদব থানাদা কৌশিনবিবে। মদুদা থানাগী বর্ত্তমান আই পি থম্বৌনা প্রজাগী যানিংদবা ৱাবম হায়বি। মদু য়াদবগী প্রজাগী নুপীদা শৰুন খোংভুপনা কাওবিবে। মসি পুন্নমক্তা নিংবা থুংদ্রদুনা ননাই ঐখোয়গী ইপুক নুংশিজবা মখে হায়জসি খন্নবগী প্রজা তিন্নজবে। মদুগী মতমদুসু প্রজা মবক্তগী ননাই লাইশ্রম কুলবিধু কৌববু ফাবিবে। মহাকপু হেক ফাবগী সভানা লাংবগা অমদি মবম খন্নজবা মতমদা ষ্টেটকী থানা অমসুং মিলিটৰী সিফাই মখৈনা মাগী মাগী চৈ কল খুৎলাই পাইদুনা সভা মযামবু য়ৈদুন চাইখাইবি।

''অদুগা ননাই ঐখোইনা ইপুক নুংঙাইত্রিঙেগী মতমদা দোকান্দাব কন্তুবী মপা মচানা প্রজাবু উশিংতব ৱাহৈ অর্থাৎ

''প্রজা নখোয কুমসিদি চদোন পিজবে, নোংমৈদি খোংপাক্লা নেৎপা বাইকুম্ পিজগনি; নুপী মখৈনা ৱাই খপহনগে, নিপানা কোন ফেংহনগে'' হাযবগী ঘটনাদা শ্রীযুক্ত বড সাহেবনা খামজিন্দুনা বিচাবগী থম্বিখি।

''তোল্লবী ননাই ঐখোয়না নিজবিবা মখাগী মবম পুন্নমক অসি শ্রীচবন্না স্না বুদ্ধি সুবিচাব তৌবিদুনা স্না যাথং হুকুম পিবিনবা ফীগাও শানা যাজবি

১) ''কুর্মশি মণিপুবদগী অতোপ্পা লৈপাক্তা ফৌ চেং থাবা পুমথিং থিংবিযু। মবম্দি কুম্শিগী লৌগী অবস্থা ফৎতে।

২) ''মণিপুবদা ফৌ চেং তকবগী ইঞ্জিন (কোন) মখৈ অমক্তা থম্বিগনু মবমদি মণিপুবনা দেশ মচা ওইবিবা অমসুং ফৌ চেং শুবতনা অযাম্বগী থবক জীবিকা ওইজবিবনি।

৩) ''খুৎলাই পাইদবা প্রজা নুপীশিংদা সঙ্গিন্না অমসুং নোংমৈ তোংনিননা থিনবগী মবমদা মতিক চাবা বিচাব তৌবিযু হৌজিক শোক্লিবা মীশিংগী দাগ জখমনা প্রমানর্নি। মখোয অসিদি প্রজাগী জীবিকা নিজৰুবনি।

৪) ''প্রজা মীযামগী মথক্তা আই পি থম্বৌনা মী ৪/৫ তদা দাগী পুননবা সই তৌ যাদবগী শৰুন খোংউপনা নুপীদা কাওবা অসিগী আই পি গী মথক্তা বিচাব তৌবিযু, প্রজা ঐখোযনা সাক্ষিনি। আই পি থম্বৌবু লৌথোক্পিযু, মাগী পুকচেল পামজদে।

৫) ''খুৎলাই য়াওদবা প্রজা নুপীগী মথক্তা থানা অমসুং মিলিটৰীগী সিফাইবু খৎলাই পাইহন্দুনা নুপী অঙাংবু শোকননবা যৈবা যাই হায়ন হুকুম পিবিবা মী অদুগী মথক্তা বিচাব তৌবিযু। মবমদি লন্নাইগী থবক ওইদবনা হায়জসী হাযবগী মীযাম তিন্নজবা মবমদনি। আমহিকসুং নোংমৈ কাপ্পগী মবমসু থিবিযু।

৬) ''প্রজাগী মীযাম মবক্তা লাইশ্রম কুলবিধু ফাবিদুনা মনিং থুংদ্রিবা প্রজাবু ইবাং হৌহনবা অমসুং প্রজানা হাইজসি হাইবা ৱাবমদা খন্নবা য়াওবম্বা হিজম ইবাবত কৌববু ফাবিবিবা, ২ মকপু থাদোকপিযু।

৭) "প্রজাগী জিবিকাদা খুৎথিংজিন্না কাববী কৌবিবা অমসুং প্রজাবু উশিংতবা ননাই কুন্তুবী মপা মচাবু মণিপুবদা থম্বিগনু। তাঙ্খোকপিয়ু। ননাই ঐখোয প্রজানা মহাকপু যানিংদ্রে। (পামজদ্রে) অমহিকসুং মণিপুবদা শেবাউজি জাৎ অমত্তা থম্বিগনু।

৮) "ঘটনা অসিমক দববাবগী মেম্ববশিংনা থোকহনবনি। শ্রীযুৎ ইবুংঙোনা তীর্থদ লেংপ্রবসু মখোয মেম্ববশিংগী ৱাখলনা কাইদনবা প্রজাগী হুকুম তৌবিগনি নিংজে। ননাই ঐখোযনা দববাবগী বর্ত্তমান মেম্ববশিংবু পামজদ্রে, প্রজাগী ফননবা ৱাখল তৌবিবা অমসুং প্রজানা পাম্বা (য়াবা) মী খল্লগা হাপ্পিদুনা সাসনগী থবক পুহনবিবা নিজবি।

"অদুগা ননাই ঐখোয়না ঘটনা অসিগী মবমদা স্না চবন যৌবিনবা (কৎপিনবা) দববাষ্ট ২/৩ সু কৎচদ্রে। প্রজাগী ওইদুনা মফম খংজদবনা কোর্ট-কী 'ফী' নমজখিদে। দববাষ্ট মখৈ অদু শ্রীচবন্না থিগৎপিদুনা সুবিচাব তৌবিয়ু। অমহিকসুং ননাই ঐখোযনা শ্রীচবন্দা কৎচবিবা দববাষ্টকী বিচাব অসি শ্রীচবন্না তৌবীবা নিজবি। অতৈ কোর্ট অমদা পিথবিদুনা বিচাব তৌহনবিগনু নিজবি।" [Sic অইবগী খুৎইদগী /বনান অমসুং ৱাহৈদা]

ইতি তাং ১৯। ১। ১৯৪০ ইং,

মণিপুব ষ্টেট প্রজা ঘটনাগী নুপী ময়াম
প্রার্থিনীগন
সাক্ষয়
(শ্রীপ্রতাপসিং অয়েকপম)

12 Confidential Letter from C. Gimson Esq., Political Agent, Manipur to J P Mills, Secretary to the Governor of Assam, dated Imphal, 20th January 1940

CHAPTER ELEVEN

(1)

Recrudescence of the Agitation and Demand for Institution of a Special Tribunal

Things were much quieter by the end of January 1940 The women had now divided openly into two parties one of which wanted to sit in the bazar in the British Reserve, and the other wanted to stop that bazar in favour of the bazar near the State Police Lines On 23rd January 1940, the latter party held a meeting at which they falsely announced that the Political Agent had a plan to close the bazar in the British Reserve About 2,000 women sat in this bazar, and the two parties happened to meet on the road There was a grand wrangle, but it turned out to be a good-tempered banter The bazar Marwaris actually started their boycott of the Manipuri goods for a month, but this did not apply to vegetables Whether boycott or not a number of Manipuris with cart-loads of rice and paddy came in between 2 to 4 in the early morning to sell their goods in secret to the wealthy Marwaris

The women agitators became quiet because they did not know what to do next Members of the Mahasabha and the Praja Sanmiloni still paraded on the roads and shouted many slogans, but the women seemed to have exhausted their enthusiasms If one party had filed a petition, the other party would also file a separate one although they asked for the same thing There seemed to be no consensus of opinion amongst the women and they were unable to enlighten His Highness the Maharaja what their real and common grievance was[11]

On 28th January 1940, a procession was led along the southern bank of the Palace moat uttering slogans like *Bande Mataram* and *Irabot-ki Jai* The crowd intentionally repeated the words so as to make the Maharaja hear them When questioned by the Maharaja, Elangbam Tompok Singh and the other leaders of the procession replied that it could not be stopped in spite of the information about the Darbar's prohibition order of 13th January His Highness thus arrested Tompok Singh and the leaders of the people who formed the *Praja* party demonstration The men were

at first sent to Sadar Thana, but as no charge could be preferred against them, they had to be released on the next day

Although the women crowd wanted His Highness himself to take up the case of the incident at the Telegraph Office, the Maharaja explained to them that the case was within the jurisdiction of the Government He however, asked them to produce "proper evidence" in support of their allegation so that he might approach the Government But the women were not able to produce any The women further asked the Maharaja to dismiss the Inspector of Police, and in reply, the Maharaja advised the women to remain peacefully and go on marketing as before He informed that he would take up the case in due course, but the crowd seemed to pay no heed to the Maharaja's words [1] The situation was very unpleasant and there was a strong undercurrent of bad feeling, though there was much less open defiance of authority Bodies of excited women went about shouting, and as instructed earlier His Highness had to receive a deputation at the Palace on 1st February (1940) with their "proofs" against the Inspector of Police about the incident of the 29th December But when the party came, the Maharaja refused to see them on the pretext that his daughter (Maharaj Kumari Tombi Sana) was very ill with haemorrhage And surprisingly Mr Gimson also expressed his moral support of the alleged culprit when he made the following remark [2]

> It is not His Highness fault that there has not been any enquiry about the alleged assault by the Inspector of Police as no aggrieved person has filed any complaint *There is no case that could stand in any Court against the I P* but the women mass continue to make a grievance of the fact that there has not been any judicial enquiry

On the next day (2nd February 1940) the deputation came to the Political Agent and announced that four of their women leaders were no longer their leaders The crowd believed that the Maharaja and the Marwaris had bribed the leaders, and they were kept in the Palace for safety At 7 p m of the day another crowd of several hundred women nearly all shouting, appeared at the Residency and complained that the four women at the Palace had refused to hand over to them the *chits* which were given on the 13th December (1939) by the Marwaris promising that they would not run their rice mills The Political Agent however said that, it made no difference if the *chits* were destroyed, as everyone knew they had been given This made the crowd greatly annoyed, as they felt confident that the four women leaders had made something out of the *chits*

His Excellency the Governor of Assam was in receipt of a petition on behalf of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni and the Nikhil

Manipuri Mahasabha requesting for an enquiry into the incidents of the 12th December, and 14th and 28th January Among the charges mentioned, the petition strongly urged that cowardly assaults were perpetrated upon a vast crowd of Manipuri women and a reign of terror had prevailed in the State, the Government did not try to allay and assuage the wounded feelings of the subjects, the State authorities pursued a ruthless policy of repression, assaulting and arresting people, the subjects were panic stricken, the rule of justice was replaced by a reign of terror and there was no security of life and property, the treatment meted out by the Goorkha troops , the President of the Darbar and the mismanagement of His Highness had all rooted out the State people's faith in the Maharaja and his administration, the way truth was being suppressed and lawlessness allowed to prevail greatly supported the belief that **"it was by the bayonet alone that the authority wanted to rule Manipur."** The petition further expressed [3]

' Despairing of justice and vindication of the honour of our women at the hands of the State authorities and apprehending that the situation may grow worse and the people might be subjected to more suffering and repression *we fervently appeal to Your Excellency to intervene* "

The petition also revealed some of the other facts for the Governor's kind attention and intervention

1 [On 7th January 1940 a mass meeting which was attended by nearly 2000 men and women was held in the Police Bazar to voice a popular demand for Reforms in the State

2 [On 9th January 1940 Irabot Singh, who was the newly appointed President of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni was arrested on a charge of sedition for his speech of 7th January His wife Rajkumari Khomdonsana had applied for the release of her husband on bail, but no bail was granted His trial was fixed on 23rd January (1940) but no trial was held on that day and nothing was known as to what had happened to him

3 [Ten women were imprisoned for one month on a charge of 'picketing' *The Civil and Military Police forces were increased by 100 and the Maharaja newly enlisted a Volunteer Corps Indiscriminate arrests and assaults were the order of the day*

4 [On 14th January 1940 *lathi* charges were made on a peaceful assemblage of nearly 9,000 people who gathered in the Police Bazar About 40 women and some men received injuries In the case of three women the injuries were serious,

5 [A woman named Oinam Ibemhal Devi was subjected to the most inhuman treatment by the Police Member of the Darbar (Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh, 2nd son of His Highness) who kicked her in the "private parts" The woman fell down senseless and bleeding She was admitted in the Civil Hospital The woman lodged a complaint to the Political Agent but no action was taken in her favour, and

6. [On 28th January 1940 a big procession of men and women was dispersed at the main gate of the Maharaja's Palace *His Highness, lathi in hand dashed out of the Palace, followed by armed Police and volunteers and he attacked the processionists* The flag was torn to pieces and trampled under foot The leaders of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni were arrested]

In the above petition of 6th February 1940, members of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni requested His Excellency the Governor of Assam to cause an inquiry into the incidents of the 12th December 1939 and the 14th and 28th January 1940, and to immediately institute an IMPARTIAL TRIBUNAL. The Governor actually desired an advice of the Political Agent as to whether the time had not come to take action with a view to remedy the conditions out of which the excitement prevalent in Manipur had arisen. He thought that it would be useful if action were taken on the lines of insisting on "certain definite reforms", and *it was most necessary to lay down more definitely the reforms since otherwise either the Maharaja or the State Darbar might attempt to evade obedience of instructions* The Secretary to the Governor of Assam wrote to Mr. Gimson:[4]

"His Excellency would be glad if you would advise in as great detail as possible what action you consider should be taken to bring peace to the State, and, if possible, to maintain peace in the future "

Rajkumari Khomdonsana Devi (wife of Irabot Singh), Lalit Madhab Sharma and some other members of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha made an approach to some Congress leaders at Gauhati in the last week of February 1940. They strongly urged the Congress leaders to take up the cause of the subjects of Manipur and to start agitation throughout the province demanding the release of Irabot Singh and all other persons who were sentenced to imprisonment in connection with the agitation in Manipur. The Congress leaders advised them to send representations to His Excellency the Viceroy and His Excellency the Governor of Assam, and to send a deputation to Ramgarh Congress to acquaint Mahatma Gandhi, members of the Congress Working Committee and other Congress leaders with the situation at Imphal and to urge them to assist the subjects of Manipur in the attainment of civil liberty and responsible government. They were further advised not to be cowed down by any repressive measures but to continue their agitation till the demands were fulfilled. Accordingly, members of the Mahasabha toured in the province and attempted to create public opinion against the State authorities and as a result of this, resolutions were passed in the Students' meeting held at Gauhati on the Congress Independence Day,[5] and in the Assam Provincial Socialist Conference held at Missamarah (Golaghat) on 30th January 1940,

sympathizing with the subjects of Manipur in their endeavour for the attainment of responsible government and demanding the 'immediate release' of all the persons who were detained or convicted by the Manipur State

On 1[st] March 1940, the Governor of Assam received another petition from the public of Manipur requesting to form a Special Tribunal apparently to try Irabot Singh and the other persons arrested The Governor, however, was not prepared at all to interfere in the administration of the Manipur State in the way the mass had proposed As was previously instructed by the Congress leaders at Gauhati a copy of the above petition of 1[st] March was also submitted to the Viceroy & Governor General of India The petitioners strongly urged that their claims were not settled as yet, the Maharaja and the Political Agent did not favour to form the Tribunal although the women mass had persistently requested to do so The Manipur State Darbar was always ready to try the cases in spite of the objections raised by the public who had every grievance that they would never get justice from the Unworthy Darbar Members Hence the public were really afraid of getting undesirable punishment from the Darbar as was done in the cases of the ten women who were imprisoned on the charge of picketing for one month simply for asking the rice suppliers to allow them retail supply The petitioners therefore, prayed to save the life of the "helpless and unhappy public' from the cruel hands of the Darbar Members [6]

The general mass of Manipur were already informed by an order of the Political Agent on 22[nd] January 1940, that if any aggrieved party had adopted constitutional methods by giving up the irrational and unconstitutional agitation' he would try to help the mass with the assistance of His Highness and the Darbar Two days before the issue of the above order, Mr Gimson wrote in one of his reports to the Secretary to the Governor (20[th] January 1940) that *the wilder elements are now acting more constitutionally* While giving an acceptable meaning of the term **Constitutional** the general public of Manipur strongly pleaded the following

1 [The crowd had never adopted any unconstitutional method at first, they asked the President of the Darbar to stop the export of rice and the President told them to come to the Darbar on the next day

2 [Accordingly the public (mostly women) went to the Darbar as requested but the Darbar had disregarded the public request i e , the export was not stopped immediately though they could on emergency cases,

3 [The Darbar Members did not inform the women mass the result of their decision in the meeting and *a few of them tried to flee away by the back doors of the Darbar*

Hall Such kind of disregard for the public by the responsible Darbar Members had certainly caused great excitement to the unhappy women mass

4 [That the Inspector of Police (Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh) assaulted a Manipuri woman by kicking on the chest with police boot and giving two slaps on the face by snatching her from the women crowd

5 [A woman called Oinam Ibemhal Devi was subjected to the most inhuman treatment by the Police Member of the Darbar Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh by kicking her in the **private parts** causing her senseless and bleeding In spite of lodging a complaint to the Political Agent no action was taken as yet

6 [Again on 3rd March 1940 the Darbar took up the case of the Inspector of Police *The mass would have no grievance if the Darbar had informed the adjournment of the case before dismissing the parties but the Darbar had dismissed the Inspector by the back door first without the knowledge of the mass* and

7 [*The Darbar showed extreme partiality by allowing a chair to sit for the Inspector in front of the mass"*]

This action of the Darbar certainly caused great annoyance to the public who assembled there in the Court till sunset Later on, the male presents were turned out and the women were assaulted which caused wounds to two women The general public therefore put up the matter to decide as to whether the mass or the Darbar had followed any unconstitutional method The petitioners concluded

> We request that we do not like that our cases should be tried by such an UNCONSTITUTIONAL DARBAR Hence Your Honour and His Highness will kindly decide our cases

The Political Agent made a hurried but unpalatable reply to the above claims of the public by saying that he did not know the grounds of unworthiness alleged to have been on the part of the Darbar Members, and also that the appointment and removal of the Darbar Members did not rest with him he did not know in what way the Police staff was found unworthy and that it was not under his jurisdiction The Political Agent thus clearly set aside the claims of the public by saying that the matters were *outside his personal concern*

(II)

The Manipur State Darbar as the Inquiry Officer the Witness and the Judge

The Manipur State Darbar Members were of the opinion that the responsibility of creating disturbance in the public tranquility must be with those people who professed themselves to be the leaders of the women mass They thought that if actions were not taken up against some of the leaders it was more than likely that the public tranquility would continue

to be disturbed. Although no one had brought a single case against the following women, the Darbar leisurely, on its own concern, made an unhurried decision to take up action against:

1. Wahengbam Tongkhombi Devi, Wahengbam Leikai
2. Nongthombam Khongnang Devi, Tera Keithel, Loukrakpam Leikai
3. Sinam Ibemcha Devi, [of the same]
4. Oinam Mukhi Devi, Wangkhei Leikai
5. Thongam Ongbi Amubi Devi, Uripok, Khaidem Leikai

Under Section 107 of the C.P.C. summons were served to the above five women to appear before the Darbar on 19th March 1940 at 8 a.m. to show cause why they each should not be ordered to execute a bond of Rs.100 with two sureties of Rs.100 each 'for keeping the peace and tranquility for one year'. The most harmful and prejudicial treatment ever exercised by the Manipur State Darbar against the State subjects was shown by the above case of the five women leaders of the agitation. There were no charges preferred against them, no body had brought a case and neither had they committed any illegal, bias or injurious crimes against the lives and property of the public. They were simply members of the mass agitation and the crowds often mentioned their names

On 19th March 1940, Tongkhombi, Khongnang, Mukhi and Amubi Devi were all present before the Court of the Darbar. Ibemcha Devi was found absent though summons were served. She was reported to be ill. Before the Court issued its order the four accused women demanded to let them know the identity as to who were the persons who filed the case against them. They did not plead that there were no breach of the peace or disturbance of the public tranquility or that there was no likelihood of a breach of the peace in future. They simply said that they did not wish to make any statement before the Darbar; rather, they showed their intention to make the required statement before the Political Agent or His Highness the Maharaja. But the Darbar Members strongly objected and they too confirmed that *the case had to be tried by them who were empowered by Law to try such cases* The following 'Order', which was issued by the Court of the Manipur State Darbar on 19th March 1940, was therefore, an ENTIRELY FALSE STATEMENT and it was like another example of political absolutism, which was worse than that of the feudal system of administration of the Middle Ages:[8]

"From information received and from our own experience, the Darbar are aware that some of the women of Imphal have been persistently committing breaches of the peace and disturbing the public tranquility and the Darbar have good reason to apprehend that unless preventive action is taken there will be a recurrence of the disturbances witnessed in the past The accused persons are ringleaders of the movement and must be held responsible for the 'unlawful acts' of their followers

"The Darbar are quite satisfied that the accused persons are likely to commit a breach of the peace or disturb the public tranquility or to do some wrongful acts which may probably occasion a breach of the peace or disturb the public tranquility They have not shown satisfactory cause why they should not be ordered to execute a bond for keeping the peace "

The Darbar thus ordered the four accused women to execute a bond of Rs 50 with two sureties of Rs 50 for keeping the peace for a period of 9 months from 19th March 1940, failing which they had to undergo simple imprisonment for the same period according to the provision of Section 107 C P C If the accused failed to execute the bond, the Order said, they had to remain in the Police custody until the next day (Wednesday, 20th March) and then be committed to Jail

The Order was strongly opposed by the whole Manipur public and they, therefore, made an appeal petition to His Excellency the Viceroy & Governor-General of India at New Delhi, against the Order of the Darbar passed in Criminal Case No 10 of 1940 The following points were outlined in the petition as the 'points of objection' against the Darbar Order

1 The Manipur State Darbar, which was the highest Administrative body of the State deliberately adopted an 'unconstitutional method in the case of the five Manipuri women,

2 The Darbar issued summons to each of the four women calling for executing a bond *But no mention was made in the summons by whom the case was brought before the Darbar*

3 The Darbar too admitted that they themselves received the informations and came to experience that the four women were the ringleaders of the movement and therefore must be held responsible for 'the unlawful acts of their followers *No mention was made of what unlawful acts their followers had committed*

4 In such a mode of procedure and decision, the Darbar was at liberty to do what they liked *The Darbar became the Inquiry Officer and also the Judge to decide the report of the very Inquiry Officer*

5 The Darbar certainly violated the universally accepted meaning of the legal term LAW The four accused women requested the Darbar to send up the case either to the Political Agent or to His Highness for a decision, since the Darbar became an Inquiry Officer of the case But the Darbar did not take it into consideration and they hurriedly completed the non-judicial procedure on their own accord While giving punishment to the accused women for a term of 9 months' imprisonment under Section 107 C P C , the Darbar simply mentioned that the accused had failed

to execute the bond As a matter of fact, the women could not execute the bond as it was beyond their power to keep and maintain peace in the State for nine months nor could they produce any security as no one could agree and UNDERSTAND the meaning of the Bond

6 The Manipur State Darbar willfully acted as the combined **Inquiry Officer**, the **Witness** and the **Judge** If such a mode in deciding cases could be allowed by the Laws of the country and if the higher authorities were not to interfere in such a situation the aggrieved parties would have no room left in the field of Law to complain against such a Darbar

Thus praying for an 'interference' of the Viceroy & Governor-General of India, the general mass of Manipur concluded their appeal petition on behalf of the four accused women [9]

The publics have claimed the Darbar Members unworthy They are doing what they like against the wishes and public justice So Your Excellency s kind interference has become absolutely necessary in the interest of public justice and law'

In the evening of 21st March 1940 a man complained to the Political Agent s Police in the bazar that when he bought four clothes a woman had tried to snatch them away and actually took one He was a man from 10 miles away of Imphal The police arrested the woman and as they took the woman to the Court a crowd of women suddenly appeared and rescued her *The leader of the rescuers was the same woman (Tongbram Sabi Devi) who had accused the Inspector of Police of kicking her* On receiving the information (while playing golf) the Political Agent came straight back and took the man s statement Then he went on to the bazar and took two platoons of Assam Rifles The woman who took the cloth was not found, but the principal rescuer' was arrested She sat on the ground and had about 200 women surrounding her closely It was found difficult to carry her away so the Political Agent sent for a stretcher from the hospital Then the women said they would disperse They made a sudden rush and the arrested woman got behind a shed and over the river before any one could stop her It was quite a good escape and was due to the Political Agent's not wishing to use force against the women There was no doubt that so far the women were encouraged to go on to greater lengths, because Mr Gimson was too lenient with them The following was the 'Statement of the man from whom the Political Agent recorded, on the same day of the incident (21st March 1940)

Statement of Yumnam Tomba (Cultivator), 34 years of age, son of Yumnam Thouba of Iakhel Lawai, Police Station – Imphal

'I went just now (about an hour ago) to the peddlers' shops in the Khwairamban Bazar My elder brother s son, Ibohal, bought four clothes I took the four clothes A woman

came and asked why I had bought the clothes I told her I came from 10 miles away for the clothes and as the town people were buying, why should not I She told me not to buy I said I was determined to have the clothes Then she snatched one of them out of my hands, but I held on to the others I do not know the woman's name I should recognise her She did not run away, but stayed there She kept hold of the cloth She had also another cloth, which was partly torn

"I went straight away to call the Police Two Police Constables came and I pointed out the woman They arrested her and brought her towards the office A large crowd of women came behind and when they were half way across the *maidan* they rescued the woman from the Police They did not say anything to me except that I was one of the *Praja*[s] and ought not to do anything I refused to listen to them "

Deposition of Ketuki Constable, 29 years of age, Constable, Agency Police, Station -Imphal

"On Thursday, the 21st March, I arrested Leipaklei on a complaint by Tomba that she had snatched away his cloth She said that the *Praja* would not allow foreign clothes Near the Polo Ground a crowd of women rescued her I was holding Leipaklei by her cloth The accused (Tongbram Sabi) whom I recognise hit me on the hands and I was forced to let go Then other women got in my way and the accused took away Leipaklei I know now that the accuser's name is Sabi and I know her quite well by sight, as I often see her in the bazar

"At first there were about 20 women but very soon there was a large crowd I tried to arrest the woman again, but was obstructed by the crowd and she escaped "

Examination of accused Leipaklei (34 years of age), **daughter of** Laishram Ningthoujao, by occupation betel-nut seller, of Heirang-goithong, Imphal

Q Did you snatch away a cloth from Tomba the complainant?

A Yes The *Praja* wanted that foreign clothes should not be worn I was not ordered to snatch away the clothes I did so because the *Praja* wished me to

Q Did you escape from lawful custody?

A Yes The *Praja* all collected, and I went away with them I went away to Iroisemba Then I came back towards my home In Uripok, on the way a *Thana Muhorir* arrested me *It was Sabi who rescued me from the Police*

Examination of accused Sabi (33 years of age), daughter of Tongbram Ningthoukhong, by occupation weaver, of Wangkhei Leikai, Imphal [10]

Q Did you rescue Leipaklei from the custody of Ketuki Constable?

A I did not strike the Constable I was with the other women and I caught hold of Leipaklei's cloth near the Polo Ground I do not know who the Constables were I, with the other *Praja*, rescued Leipaklei from the Constables

Leipaklei and Sabi who escaped from the police custody on 21st March were re-arrested on the next day by the State Police. The Political

Agent tried and sentenced them on the morning of 23rd. There were no excitements, possibly because the Manipuris were busy with their preparations for the *Holi* festival.

JUDGEMENT

(Sig. C. Gimson 23rd March 1940)

The accused Leipaklei Manipurini has been charged with escaping from the lawful custody of Constable Ketuki on the 21st March (1940) near the Polo Ground.

"The case arose out of an attempt by some women to prevent the purchase by Manipuris of foreign cloth in the bazar. One Yumnam Tomba Singh had come in from his house with his nephew to buy clothes for the *Holi* festival. The accused with some other women was trying to stop such purchases. She attacked the complainant Tomba and tried to snatch away his clothes. He had four and he resisted; but she succeeded in taking away one of them. He resented this and complained to two Police Constables that this woman had stolen his cloth. The Constables thereupon went and arrested the woman, who was identified by Tomba and took her towards the Court. Before they reached the Court a crowd of women came up and assaulted the Constables and obstructed them, and the accused Leipaklei escaped and ran away.

"She has pleaded guilty to taking away the cloth and to the escape, and in fact, there can be no doubt about her guilt. She had tried to make out that she was acting as one of the *Praja*[s] who do not wish to allow the other *Praja*[s] to buy 'foreign' cloth.

"Thousands of people buy cloth in Imphal just before the *Holi* festival every year. Some buy Manipuri cloth and some 'foreign' cloth and it is only lately that there has been any outcry about 'foreign' cloth. In this case too "foreign" cloth means non-Manipuri cloth and not non-Indian cloth.

"As the accused appears to have been acting under the influence of a form of *"mass hysteria"*, I do not think that it is necessary to proceed with the charge of theft.

"It is clearly proved by the evidence of the Constable and of Yumnam Tomba that the accused escaped from custody In fact she has pleaded guilty. It is also proved that the custody was lawful, and from the circumstances of the case it is quite clear that the accused intended to escape Even if she had no such intention before the other women arrived, she had after their arrival. She did not return voluntarily to custody, and when she was arrested the next day, she was not at her own house.

"Such an escape cannot be treated lightly; but considering that the accused is a woman, I think it unnecessary to give a long sentence of imprisonment. *I find the accused guilty under Section 224 I.P.C., and sentence her to 2 months simple imprisonment (S.I.).*"

(III)

And More Trials by the Darbar on Lynch Law.

"The public have every grievance that they will never get justice from the present Darbar as the public are claiming the Darbar [as] Unworthy of Administration" – The general public of Manipur State, 1st March 1940.

Irabot Singh was sentenced by the Court of the Manipur State Darbar to three years simple imprisonment (S I) in the morning of 21st March 1940 There were threats that he would be rescued, if he were sentenced But owing to heavy rain the crowd was small and nothing had been attempted

In January last (1940) Irabot spoke in a public meeting at the Police Bazar before a large crowd of men and women, and two days after, he was arrested on a charge of sedition His wife Rajkumari Khomdonsana Devi applied for the release of her husband on bail, but no bail was allowed His trial was fixed on 23rd January 1940, but neither was it held on that day Nothing was known as to what had happened to him In the middle of January, Rajkumari Khomdonsana arrived at Gauhati to consult with the local leaders about the situation in Manipur In a press statement she said that the eight men who were arrested with Irabot Singh were on bail, whereas Irabot was not granted bail even on the representations submitted by a number of people in Manipur, and he was confined in the cell for an indefinite time The Rajkumari was, therefore, compelled to submit a petition on her husband's behalf to His Excellency the Governor of Assam to have the case properly and speedily decided Th following points were noted in the Rajkumari's petition [11]

1 The women's agitation was on account of the inability of the State to protect its inhabitants, particularly the women, from the exploitation of the mill-owners who accumulated all the available paddy in the State and thereby keeping the women of Manipur unemployed and in a state of starvation

2 The women demonstrators numbering about 5 000 were charged and wounded with bayonets by a posse of Gurkha Rifles under the command of an English Commandant,

3 Although the women demanded an enquiry into the incident by the Political Agent and His Highness the Maharaja, no steps were taken to do so

4 Irabot was away when the occurrence took place, but apprehending the seriousness of the public feeling over the incident, as well as the gravity of the situation, he was requested by the members of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni to submit a memorial to His Excellency the Governor explaining the real situation in the State

5 On 7th January 1940, Irabot delivered a speech in the Police Bazar The meeting also passed resolutions

6 Instead of creating feelings of disaffection towards the State authority, the speech in question was an appeal to His Highness to redress the grievances of the women by conceding an enquiry, and a request to allow a Constitution to the people,

7 On 9th January Irabot was arrested on the charge of sedition and put into the *Hajat* and in spite of the petition submitted bail was not granted by the State Darbar

8 His Highness the Maharaja was inimically disposed towards Irabot Singh, *not only out of private grudge* (?) but also for his having taken up the cause of the people for a constitution

9 The Jail administration in Manipur (its forces and officers) was put under the direct control of His Highness the Maharaja and Irabot therefore felt that his life was not safe in that Jail

10 In view of his taking up the cause of the women mass against the Darbar Members Irabot could not expect a proper and lawful action from the Darbar and also for the fact that, the Darbar was a body responsible only to His Highness the Maharaja

11 Some of the murderer convicts (in the case of Madhumangal Marwari) were taken to the Maharaja s Palace and being well fed and all other political prisoners were also released from the *Hajat* and jail Therefore Irabot s anxiety for the safety of his life was more aggravated

12 This was an extraordinary case which would justify interference by the Crown Representative and

13 The mismanagement by His Highness brought about such scarcity and unemployment in the land and *the whole agitation including the injury to so many women was due to His Highness s sacrificing the interest of the people of his State for some gain to him* Unless the Crown Representative interfered with the administration of the Maharaja and his Darbar the people of Manipur would have to face starvation and famine

His Excellency the Governor of Assam was, therefore prayed to (a) 'order an immediate release of Irabot on bail if not at least to order an immediate removal of Irabot to some other jail outside the jurisdiction of His Highness the Maharaja (b) 'cause an enquiry to be made regarding the Administration of the State with a view to save the people from starvation and famine and (c) take steps for granting a Representative Constitution as may be able to safeguard the life and property of the citizens against the arbitrary power of His Highness the Maharaja

On 7th January 1940, Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh who was the Inspector of Civil Police sent one Salam Tomba Singh (Sub-Inspector) and Karam Yaiskul Singh (Assistant Sub-Inspector) to hear the meeting of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni at the Police Line Bazar On their return, they reported to Dhanachandra the gist of the speech delivered by Irabot at the meeting, and in the next morning, another Laishram Yaimabi Singh (Subedar Major) of the Manipur Police gave a separate report to Dhanachandra through the Commandant of the State Military Police On receipt of this information Dhanachandra

reported to the Police Member (Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh) remarking that Irabot had delivered a "seditious speech". Dhanachandra was later on ordered by the Darbar to arrest Irabot and take up a case under Section 124A. This he obediently did, and after investigation he had sent up the case to the Darbar for trial. *Dhanachandra was not present at the meeting*

Salam Tomba, in his version said that he was present at the meeting and he heard Irabot speaking on the export of rice, stoppage of rice-mills, stoppage of cinema and on the reform of the State administration He also alleged that Irabot asked the people to remember the Telegraph Office episode under the following:[12]

"We begged for rice and in return received bayonet wounds and wounds from the gun-butts For one handful of rice we paid two handfuls of blood Had we not paid this blood we should have not succeeded in closing the export of rice The export of rice and the mills had [?] been closed at the cost of the blood of a Brahmini woman The women had shed their blood for the sake of food (পুক্কীদমক) and the men folk should not remain silent through fear of arrest and going to jail (জুবক পুম্নমক অফবা ফত্তবগী খুজী নখোয়গী নখুত্তনি) Be determined, it is not right to be afraid of the jail walls See, what was the condition of Japan and Russia Rise up, be united, the women's work is finished and now has come the time for the men (ব্রহ্মনীগী ঈ তাবগী লমন খুম্নশি) *Let us take revenge for the spilt blood of the Brahmini*

"In former times Manipuris were like fish kept in a bowl to be enjoyed by the owner whenever he wished " ("মমাংঙৈদা ঐখোয়াস ঙাযোক চফু মনুংদা চাননবা ঙা যোক্লগা মপুনা চানিং চানিংবা মতমদা ফাদুনা চাথোকপা অদুগী ফীভমদা লৈবম্মী। দেশবাসী পুম্নমক তাবিয়ু হৃজিক্তি মদুগী মতম লৈত্রে কনানসু ঐখোয়বু লাকাদবা যাবনোই।")

Salam Tomba further alleged that Irabot had asked: 'whether we should consider our stomachs or taxes first. We should first feed ourselves well and then later work for payment of taxes. We should not sell our rice and paddy Some people might argue that unless rice was sold how could the people pay taxes A fitting reply was that there were five lakhs of people paying taxes in Manipur.' Irabot also talked about the Telegraph Office incident He said that even without making an enquiry first the Political Agent who was not present at the occurrence issued a statement in the papers saying there was no proof that the women had been injured with bayonets. Irabot said – 'there was proof', and he showed a photograph to the crowd which he said had been cut from the *Hindusthan Standard* Salam Tomba further continued in his statement:

"I have given only those parts which I consider to be seditious I noted them down at the spot while Irabot was speaking He spoke for about 3 hours Some of his speech I recorded exactly, as for other parts of his speech I recorded the sense only I wrote my notes in Manipuri The meeting continued upto about 8 20 p m I was standing inside the crowd at a distance of about 7 or 8 yards from where Irabot was standing I cannot say

definitely whether Irabot read his speech and whether he was holding a paper or not At the meeting no formal resolutions were recorded but whenever Irabot proposed anything the crowd agreed

"In my notes which I wrote while Irabot was speaking, I recorded the following speech "

("ব্রহ্মনী অমবু সঙ্গীন্না থিন্দুনা ঈ থবা তাখিবা অদুগী মমল চেং থিংলে, কোল থিংলে মসি ফংলে।")

Laishram Yaimabi Singh who was an officiating Subedar Major of the Manipur Police was in the Police Lines on 7th January, and on seeing a large crowd gathering there he went to see what was going on He said in his deposition that he recorded the following 'statement' made by Irabot in the meeting [13]

"In connection with the bayonet attack on women the Political Agent said that there was no proof that bayonets had been used and that the wounds were caused by stones being thrown by the crowd The Political Agent's report has been published in the paper before the people were aware that an enquiry had been made There are pictures in the *Hindusthan Standard*, which were taken at the time of the occurrence Saying this Irabot showed a paper to the crowd '[Sic]

Laishram Yaimabi also deposed that the "notes" which he recorded were written while he was listening to the speech He stood at a distance of about 15 yards from Irabot when the latter made the following statement.

"টেলিগ্রাফ অফিসতা পুং ১ তাবা মতম্দা থোকপা থৌদোক অদু নিংশিংবিয়ু। চেংগী ভিক্ষা নিজুব্বদা সঙ্গীন মচিন, নোংমৈগী কুণ্ডা ফংই। মসিগী মবমদা লমন খুম্নবা হৌনবী থৌবাং তৌবনা চুম্মি অমসুং মসিগী প্রতিকাব তৌফম থোকই। চেং খুয়া অমগী মহুত্তা ঈ খুজোক অমা পিদুনা লৈবা, ঈ খুজোক অসি পিবমদ্রবদি চেংসু বন্দ তৌবমলোইদবনি।"

After considering all the evidence in detail the Manipur State Darbar made their foregone conclusion saying that Irabot in the course of his speech made the following remarks

1 "The women who had begged for rice had received bayonet points and rifle-butts instead,
2 "One handful of rice had been purchased at the price of two handfuls of blood,
3 "Rice export would not have been closed without the spilling of blood,
4 "The people should take revenge and remedy the wrong, and
5 "He (Irabot) had exhorted the men folk to rise up, not to fear jail, and take revenge for the blood of the Brahmini "

The Darbar, therefore, maintained that Irabot's speech was a *"gross misrepresentation of facts "* and it would be highly successful in bringing into hatred and disaffection towards the State Authority But matters could not be so easily concluded with the Darbar's resolution of

21st March 1940 Because Rajkumari Khomdonsana Devi made another appeal petition to His Excellency the Governor of Assam for setting aside the order of His Highness confirming the Darbar's conviction She alleged that being a member of the Raj family in Manipur Irabot was certainly a cousin of His Highness the Maharaja, and the two organizations of Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni of which Irabot was the elect President, were carrying on *a peaceful, legitimate and constitutional agitation* for transference of more powers into the hands of the people and for the establishment of a democratic form of Government in Manipur Smelling the influence that Irabot had on the people of Manipur, and possibly in the belief that, he was responsible for the women's agitation, the State Police with the approval of His Highness arrested and charged him with making seditious speeches, and the State Darbar which [had] tried the case on Lynch Law after a confinement of Irabot for about two months in the jail without trial, convicted him under Section 124A of the *Indian Penal Code* and sentenced him to three years' imprisonment His Highness the Maharaja not only rejected the appeals of the Rajkumari, but also denied of giving even a little amenity like a 'mosquito curtain' to Irabot during his confinement before the trial The Rajkumari noted the following arguments in her appeal petition to His Excellency the Governor

That, all the prosecution witnesses with the exception of Mayanglambam Khomdon Singh of Malom Tuliyaima were the State Police officials, and the evidence was so palpably prejudicial and one sided that His Highness should not have upheld the order of the Darbar based on such evidence

Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh, Inspector of Police, was not present at the meeting on 7th January 1940, and his whole evidence was hearsay

Salam Tomba, Sub-Inspector, did not know shorthand writing and his cross-examination disclosed the facts that he did not take down the speech as Irabot spoke, and he was noting down the sentence when other sentences were being uttered He did not take down the whole evidence in order to give the judge an idea of the effect of the whole speech He even did not remember the sequence of the speech or of anything except the sentences that were supposed to incriminate

Karam Yaiskul Singh, Assistant Sub-Inspector, did not take any notes He merely heard and yet he strongly remembered only the sentences that offended the Section

Mayanglambam Khomdon Singh was a casual attendant of the bazar. He heard speeches, but his evidence regarding what he heard definitely showed that he was present only when the speeches were finished and resolutions were being adopted. Thus utterances from the crowd *"agreed", "agreed"* were with reference to the resolutions of the meeting. But the way in which Constable Jhulon obtained the evidence of Khomdon Singh amidst a concurrence of several thousand people only indicated that he was a *"got-up witness"* by the prosecuting Policeman. The Rajkumari emphasized in her petition:[14]

" The whole evidence is a creation by the Police and when the defence is taken into consideration the Darbar should have no difficulty in discharging Irabot When he was in jail, I could not prepare a written speech to keep it in the hands of the defence witness Irabot spoke nothing seditious. *Being a believer in the doctrine of Ahimsa, he could not use the expressions alleged to have been ascribed to him* He did not do anything but only exercised his right of legitimate agitation for the removal of the grievances of the people "

(IV)

'Women sent to jail", "Leader sent to prison", "Prince murdered" 'these are the recent reports from Imphal, the capital of Manipur These reports cannot but create a sensation in the Indian mind ' ***The Hindusthan Standard,*** **31st March 1940**

One question seemed to be very pertinent. The Manipur State Darbar knew the feelings of the people and of the world outside. The advisers and Members of the Darbar were mostly educated and intelligent people. They knew the conditions in British India and they were perfectly aware of the world around them. How was it then that they did not favour freedom within their borders? The reason was that - 'ideology of autocracy was still the administrative guide in the Manipur State', and also that the authorities always showed complete indifference to any administrative reforms. It appeared that the people of Manipur had fallen on evil days by the beginning of April, 1940, and the situation became more difficult day-by-day as His Highness the Maharaja and the Political Agent did not take up any of the important matters which might bring justice to the people. The Political Agent had set aside all the claims of the people for His Highness to consider; and His Highness again sent down every case to his Darbar for disposal, who, on their part, leisurely exercised Lynch Laws over the public.[15] Many people who were declared chief promoters of the agitation were given imprisonment: Irabot to three years (S.I.), Kulabidhu Singh, a member of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni to four months (R.I.) and four Manipuri women to nine months (S.I.). His Highness the Maharaja and the Political Agent allowed the State Darbar and the Police staffs to decide cases on their accord, but against the wishes of the public who had

already declared the Members and the Police to be most Unworthy and Unfit for administration The two important departments (Darbar and Police) were at liberty to do what they liked and it was no doubt that they brought anarchy everywhere in the State. The women had still observed bazar-hartals and many unexpected events occurred Rajkumar Digendra Singh[16] and his Brahmin Lalabi Sharma were murdered in broad daylight on 22nd March 1940 One Heisnam Gopal Singh murdered them at 11 a m using a *Dao*, and in view of the heinous crime the public claimed that they were in great fear The police became the reporters of any crime and they acted as the approver of the cases Likewise the Manipur State Darbar was the Accuser, the Judge, the Jury and the Executioner - all combined in one

Charges against the Inspector of Police (Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh) were made from different corners of the public and all mentioned a specific incident of "kicking" and "slapping" a Manipuri woman called Sabi The first mention of the incident was made in a petition dated 19th January 1940, filed by the women mass to Her Highness the Maharani of Manipur The petition was read as under

"প্রজা মীযামগী মথক্তা আই পি থম্বৌনা মী ৪/৫ তদা দাম্নী পুননবা সঁই তৌ যাদবগী শরুন খোংউপনা নুপীদা কাববা অসিগী আই পি গী মথক্তা বিচাব তৌবিযু, প্রজা ঐখোযনা সাক্ষিনি। আই পি থম্বৌবু লৌথোকপিযু, মাগী পুকচেল পামজদে।"

In the 17th February 1940 issue of *Forward* a weekly paper [Editor- Bhupendra Kumar Datta, Vol III, New Series, No 4, Saturday, February 17 1940, p 11, Col 1] there was an article called "Manipur State Peoples' Struggle' which was thought erroneous and misleading by Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh, Police Member The article was published in the paper by the deputationists of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha under a resolution of the Working Committee Elangbam Tompok Singh, Secretary in-charge of the Mahasabha said that the Working Committee wrote the article[1] and it contained the following *To decide the case of one Chhabi [Sabi] Manipurini, who was assaulted by the Inspector of Police, by snatching her from the crowd and giving two slaps with a kick of boot on the chest* 'The actual petition, which was filed by Sabi Devi herself to His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur, was also dated 19th January 1940 She complained against the Inspector of Police in her petition [18]

"ননাই ঐহাক্লা বর্ত্তমান ঘটনাগী মবমদা প্রজা নুপীশিংগা লোয়ননা স্না কোনুংদা শ্রীযুক্ত মহাবাজ খুকমজবা চৎচে। লম্বীদগী সদব থানানা নুপী মযামবু কৌশিনবি। মদুগী

চংজব্নবদা ননাই ঐখোয় মশাবু (৫) আই: পি: না সহি তৌ হায়; ননাই ঐখোয়না প্রজাগীদমক ঐখোয মী ৫ তগী সহি লৌদুনা প্রজাগী দায়ী পিবদি তৌবিগনু, লৌবিগে হায়ববদি প্রজা শুনা লৌবিয়ু খুমজে। মসিগীদমক আই: পি: না ননাই ঐহাকপু প্রজা মীযাম মমাংদগী চিংশিন্দুনা শরুন খোংউপনা ননাইগী থবাক্তা খোংপাক্লা কাওবিবে। অমহিকসুং বজাইদসু খুবাক্লা থাবিবে। শ্রীচবন্না প্রজাগীদমক মীয়াম মমাংদা আই: পি.না ননাইবু অপমান পিবিবগী আই: পি: গী মথক্তা মতিক চাবা স্না ঝায়েল তৌবিয়ু খুকামজবি।"

ইতি তাং ১৯। ১। ১৯৪০ ইং

তোম্রম নিঙোল এনসেম্বম ওংবী ছবী
সাং ঝাংখৈ নিংথেম পুখ্রি মপাল।

The prosecution claim was that Sabi was slapped by the Inspector of Police and kicked her in the breast Although most of the prosecution witnesses alleged that the Inspector had kicked her very hard, there was no sign of injury found on the person of Sabi The prosecution evidence was absolutely riddled with discrepancies and improbabilities. Sabi herself claimed that at the time of the alleged assault, the Inspector was standing on the *Thana* steps (three steps up), and she was standing at the foot of the steps She also claimed that she became unconscious for a short time, fell back and was supported by some women who were standing behind her

Prosecution Witness No 2 however, gave a different version She said that the Inspector came down the steps as far as the edge of the grass in the *Thana* compound and did not pull Sabi but slapped and kicked her in the breast with great force She admitted however, that she did not bother to look if Sabi had received any injuries

Prosecution Witness No 5 said that the Inspector came from inside the *Thana* to attack Sabi This version was quite different from any of the other varied accounts given by the Prosecution Witnesses She said that although she clearly saw the Inspector kick Sabi, she did not know whether he kicked her very hard, or whether the Inspector came down the steps or not In explanation of the vagueness of her 'eye-witness account' she said that it was dark at the time, which apparently prevented her from seeing whether the Inspector came down from the verandah, but did not in any way interfere with her clearly seeing the Inspector kicking Sabi in the breast

Prosecution Witness No 6 gave yet another version of the incident She claimed that the Inspector came down one step from the verandah, reached out and pulled Sabi (However, the other witnesses strongly denied

that the Inspector pulled Sabi) She also alleged that the women then caught hold of Sabi and pulled her back (The other witnesses also denied this) She claimed that the Inspector slapped and kicked Sabi while he was trying to pull her up the verandah steps (This version was found different materially from the versions of her fellow witnesses)

The Darbar also took the evidence of Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh (Police Member) and a man called Longjam Kaoba Singh [Press Representative] who both claimed that they were present at the time of the alleged occurrence It appeared from their evidence that when the Inspector stretched out his hand towards Sabi, the crowd of women rushed in front of Sabi, caught hold of the Inspector, and tried to pull him away from the *Thana* Then the Police Officers and the Constable pulled the Inspector up the verandah steps

There was no talk at that time that Sabi had been kicked A little later, a section of the crowd began to shout that the Police Inspector kicked a Brahmini When the Political Agent came on the scene, Sabi simply complained to him that she had been slapped on the face and kicked on the forehead [chest?] Thus on 29th March 1940, the President of the Manipur State Darbar and the other Members, *viz*, T A Sharpe Esq (PMSD) R K Bhaskar Singh (O M), N Shyamacharan Singh, *Selungba* (O M), M K Priyobrata Singh (O M), S Nadiyachand Singh (A M) and I Ibungohal Singh (A M) jointly issued the following Order of judgement against Tongbram Sabi Devi [19]

"The Darbar have perused all the evidence in detail The charge is a grave one but is not supported by any evidence of injury, which must have resulted if the complainant had been kicked hard in the breast as alleged

"The evidence given by the Prosecution Witnesses agrees only on one point i e , that the complainant was slapped and kicked by the Inspector of Police but the accounts of the circumstances under which the alleged assault took place varies considerably from one witness to another It is perfectly easy for a witness to say that Sabi was slapped and kicked, but it is only when such an allegation is true that the witness's accounts of the details of the assault will corroborate each other In this particular case such corroboration is conspicuous by its absence

"The Darbar find that prosecution have failed to establish their case against the Inspector of Police Not only have they failed to establish their case but have put forward evidence which is so full of discrepancies and improbabilities that *the Darbar are inclined to believe that the complainant has brought a false case against the Inspector of Police*

"Most of the Prosecution Witnesses have *possible reasons* for wishing to harm the reputation of the Inspector, most of them having relatives who have been sent to jail or prosecuted in cases sent up by the *Thana* For example Prosecution Witness No 2 admits that her father Abujam Angou Singh was imprisoned many times and Prosecution Witness

No 4 admits that she is the wife of Sinam Chaoba Singh who was sent up by the *Thana* on a charge of sedition Prosecution Witness No 7 admits that her father in-law s son was imprisoned

IN VIEW OF THE EVIDENCE THERFFORE THE CASE IS DISMISSED

Exactly after one month of the publication of the following statement in the 17th February 1940 issue of *Forward*, a weekly paper (above cited) which was read as "To decide the case of one Oinam Ibemhal Devi Manipurini who was assaulted in an inhuman manner by Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata (Police Member) causing bleeding for several days She remained in the Civil Hospital for several days under the treatment of the Civil Surgeon," there came another article on 17th March of the *Hindusthan Times* in which the Maharaj Kumar was strongly alleged to have kicked a woman (Ibemhal) in the 'private parts ' with severe injuries Being highly upset, on 6th April 1940, in the nighttime, Priyobrata Singh hurriedly came to see the Political Agent about the article, which was actually written by one GN Bardaloi for the paper (*Hindusthan Times*) and he defended himself by saying that *he had not even touched any woman* The Political Agent had no doubt that the allegation was a foul libel and no one had filed a case about it though he thought (speaking from memory) that one of the many petitions filed by the women mass or the Mahasabha had referred to it Priyobrata was almost prepared to write to Mr GN Bardaloi asking him to withdraw the allegation but he did not know whether he could take up effective action if satisfaction had denied him and it meant a long-drawn out trial in Calcutta or some other uncongenial place[11] Actually a woman had filed a petition to the Political Agent by alleging that Priyobrata had kicked her in her private parts The petition was filed on 1st February 1940 and the occurrence alleged was on 14th January The Political Agent told the woman petitioner that she should file a case in the State Courts which jurisdiction but afterwards it was found that she did not file any [70]

Cases of Irabot Singh U/S 124A I P C in Criminal Case No 4 of 1940 four women of the mass U/S 107 C P C and of Sabi Devi in Criminal Case No 6 of 1940 were all tried by the Manipur State Darbar in spite of the strong objections from the public that the Darbar should not try the cases of the public as the Members were declared UNWORTHY and UNFIT The public made petition appeals on many occasions to His Highness to examine the alleged points by taking proofs from the public But there was little hope of the Maharaja taking up actions against the Darbar Members[11]

On 10th April 1940, the general mass of Manipur made a strong protest against the decision adopted by the Darbar in the cases of the public, especially in the three above cited cases. The public argued that all the police cases were supported by police reports and police evidence; and the Darbar independently assumed the roles of enquiry officer, witness, accuser, judge and jury and the Executioner – all combined in one force. In Criminal Case No.6 of 1940 (Sabi's Case), Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh who was a Police Member himself gave evidence in the Court and he also acted as a witness of the Inspector. He was a Judge in the judgement too!! This case of the Inspector of Police was a PRIMA FACIE case, because the action was one, which had been committed before the eyesight of some four thousand people. So the women mass brought the complaint against the Inspector, but the Darbar took up the case as *"one independently lodged by Sabi only."* It appeared, therefore, that the Darbar could not believe in the evidence of the four thousand persons, and it believed only in the evidence of the two people *viz.*, Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh, the Police Member and Longjam Kaoba Singh, the Press Representative!! As a matter of fact, it was well known that the Police Member would never like to harm his Inspector of Police![21]

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Recrudescence of the Agitation and Demand for Institution of a Special Tribunal.

1. See Memo No.808 P II-I, dated Imphal, the 29th January 1940, sig., Chura Chand Singh, K.C.S.I., C.B.E., Maharaja of Manipur.
2. Confidential Letter from C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur, to J.P. Mills, Secretary to the Governor of Assam, dated Imphal, the 2nd February 1940.
3. Confidential D.O. No.101 C, Governor's Secretariat, Shillong, dated 9th February 1940 to C. Gimson Esq., I.C.S., Political Agent in Manipur, Imphal, enclosed 'Petition' dated 6.2.1940, sig. Magho Singh, Lalit Madhab et al.
4. Confidential D.O. No.100 C. Governor's Secretariat, Shillong dated 9th February 1940 to C. Gimson Esq., I.C.S., Political Agent in Manipur, Imphal.
5. See Memo No.181-83 C., dated Shillong, the 9th February 1940 from Deputy Central Intelligence Officer to J.P. Mills Esq., I.C.S., Secretary to His Excellency the Governor of Assam, Shillong.

CONGRESS INDEPENDENCE DAY – JANUARY 26TH- "In 1937, at the instance of the Government of India, action was taken in a number of Provinces to declare the Independence Pledge forfeit, as a seditious document, under Section 19 of the *Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act*, 1931 In 1938, as Congress Ministries were in office in seven Provinces, the ban was removed It was believed that the observance of the Day (26th January) in 1938 and 1939 aroused little interest" - [See D O No 5-GG2/40 from J A Thorne Esq, C S I, C I E, I C S, Secretary to Governor General (Public), New Delhi, dated 17th January 1940 to J P Mills Esq, I C S, Secretary to His Excellency the Governor of Assam]

6 Petition to His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India, Delhi, dated Imphal, 1st March 1940, sig Magho Singh, Lalit Madhab Sharma et al

7 Petition of general mass of Manipur (men and women) to the Political Agent, Manipur, dated Imphal 9th March 1940

IMPHAL INCIDENT "Two Women Alleged to Have Been Injured," March 10, 1940] "Two women are stated to have received injuries following a clash between a group of women and the State's Civil Police It is stated that the women surrounded the Darbar Hall when the President and Members of the Darbar were inside, demanding disposal of a case in which an Inspector of Police of Imphal was charged with assaulting a woman The Police subsequently dispersed the women two of whom are alleged to have been injured "- *Associated Press*

8 Criminal Case No 10 of 1940 (in the Court of the Manipur State Darbar), Manipur State-Complainant Vs W Tongkhombi, N Khongnang, S Ibemcha et al -Accused, Order dated 19th March 1940

9 "Appeal Petition" to His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India, New Delhi, dated Imphal, the 21st March 1940, sig Magho Singh, Lalit Madhab Sharma, Banka Bihari Sharma et al

10. **"The two women (Leipaklei and Sabi) who escaped from custody on the 21st were re-arrested yesterday (22nd March) by the State Police. I tried them and sentenced them this morning."** C Gimson, 23rd March 1940, Imphal

11 Petition of Rajkumari Khomdonsana (daughter of late R K Chandrahash, elder brother to His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur) to His Excellency the Governor of Assam, dated Camp Gauhati, the 16th January 1940

12 See Statement of Salam Tomba Singh (Sub-Inspector No 1), Prosecution Witness No 2, sig T A Sharpe, 12th March 1940

13 Statement of Laishram Yaimabi Singh, Officiating Subedar-Major, S M P, Prosecution Witness No 3, sig T A Sharpe, 12th March 1940

14 See Petition submitted by Rajkumari Khomdonsana Devi (on behalf of Hijam Irabot Singh) to His Excellency (Sir Robert Neil Reid) the Governor of Assam, sig Rajkumari Khomdonsana, n d

15 Petition submitted by the general public of Manipur State to Mr J C Higgins Esq, I C S, Tribunal Member, Shillong, dated 29th March 1940, sig Magho Singh, Banka Bihari Sharma et al

16 Rajkumar Digendra Singh was the elder brother of Chura Chand Maharaja by a second mother Thangjam Chitrabati (wife to Chaobi Yaima)

"তাং ২২ । ৩ । ১৯৪০ ইং, ঈবাইদা অযুক পুং ১১ তাবদা হৈস্নামচা গোপালনা শ্রীযুক্তা ময়াঙ্গুং দিকেন্দ্রজিৎনে, গুরুময়ুম লালাবী শর্ম্মনে অনিবু থাংনা খন্দুনা নোংগাইএ ।" – লাইবেনময়ুম ইবুংঙোহল অমসুং নিংথৌখোংজম খেলচন্দ্র, সম্পাদকশিং, "চৈথারোল কুম্বাবা", লমাই ৬৩৪

17 See Memo No 165 N M M , dated Imphal the 13th March 1940, from the Secretary, Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha, Manipur State, Imphal to the Supdt State Office, Manipur State

18 See 'Petition' to His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur filed by Tongbram Ningol Yensembam Ongbi Chhabi [Sabi] Devi, Wangkhei Ningthem Pukhri Mapan-Complainant Vs Khomdram Thambou Singh, Inspector of Police, State Sadar *Thana*, Accused, dated 19th January 1940

19 Manipur State Darbar, Criminal Case No 6 of 1940 Tongbram Ningol Yensembam Ongbi Sabi of Wangkhei Ningthem Pukhri Mapan (Complainant) Vs Khomdram Thambou Singh, I P, Sadar *Thana* (Accused)

20 See 'Confidential' Letter from C Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur, to the Secretary to the Governor, dated Imphal 10th April 1940

21 See 'Petition' of Manipur public - Men and Women (Appellants) to His Excellency the Governor of Assam, Shillong, dated Imphal the 10th April 1940

CHAPTER TWELVE

(I)

He who allows oppression shares the crimes Erasmus Darwin

Revival of Oppressive Measures by the State Authorities & Mock-Heroic Actions of Dulob and Nitai

The Viceroy & Governor-General of India, as well as the Governor of Assam were frequently reported by the much-aggrieved general mass of Manipur through many petitions, appeals and public protests against the oppressive measures of the State authority They claimed that the State authorities of Manipur became an-anti party to the public and many unconstitutional methods were followed against the interest of the State subjects A few persons also became "running spies" of the State authority to bring cases against the public and upon whose evidence the State Courts had to depend entirely while making decisions His Highness the Maharaja himself was the Commandant of the State Military Police, Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh (a son of His Highness) was the Police Member of the Darbar and Maharaj Kumar Lokendra Singh (a son of His Highness by the fifth Rani Haobam Ilabati Devi) acted as the Assistant Commandant of the State Military Police from 23rd July 1938 onwards, and in the absence of His Highness from the State the Maharaj Kumar always held the post of the Commandant (S M P) He was barely 27 years old[1]

On many occasions the Police Member of the Darbar, the Inspector of Police, the Constables of the Police staff and the military forces acted jointly and assaulted the helpless and unarmed men and women with bayonet charge The public claimed that there was no authority to hear the complaints of the aggrieved people, and on the other, the same authority were ever ready to take up actions against the public Although the Political Agent was approached on the subject, he simply said that he could do nothing unless the existing rules of administration were changed[11]

It was now quite apparent that some people tried very hard to induce the women folk to attend the daily bazar They said that they did so by an order of His Highness the Maharaja The bazar women of Tourangbam Leikai (Uripok) were thus encouraged to attend the bazar

and they returned home every day under a police escort. It so happened on 29th April 1940, that the women of Tourangbam Leikai returned home after attending bazar under the escort of Constable Wahengbam Jhulon Singh [the man who acted as a 'Court Witness' in the trial of Irabot on 14th March 1940 and a true follower of Inspector Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh), Dulob Singh (*Amin*), Nitai Singh and some others When they reached the temporary bazar at Uripok, they felt proud enough (in a foolish manner) to call bad names to the other women who attended the temporary bazar and even they threatened to assault the latter for no purpose Some saner women of the mass asked the reason of their doing so in an illegal manner Without any warning, the males of the escort party at once perpetrated and assaulted the women of the temporary bazar It was alleged that two women, namely, Mukhi and Chitra were assaulted with marks of injuries Their necklaces were torn away and the moneybags of Mukhi and Chitra with contents of Rs 10 & odd and Rs 3/8/ respectively were snatched away by Dulob Singh (*Amin*) Immediately after the skirmish the escort party disappeared Without delay, the women crowd approached the *Thana* but in vain, they then went to the Sadar Panchayet Court where no members could be seen for a long time As the crowd could not find any authority to complain to against the trouble makers [Dulob and Nitai, who, of course, laboured under the direction of His Highness the Maharaja], the crowd went to the house of the former to see him and ask the reason Dulob Singh could not be found in his house as the inmates said But to the great surprise of the crowd, the Police Member, the Inspector of Police, some Constables and about 80 Military Police suddenly appeared at the house of Dulob Singh The crowds were thus dispersed and sentries were kept in the houses of Dulob and Nitai Singh

Next day, on 30th April, without any appeal from the public, the Sadar Panchayet Court took up the case in a hand-made judicial style of *Mukhi and Chitra (Complainant) on behalf of the women mass Vs Dulob Singh (Amin) Nitai, Ibotombi, Kala and Wahengbam Jhulon Singh (Constable)* Dulob Singh was sent to *Hajat* under a strong escort of *Dolaipabas* But as soon as he reached near the Cherap road, the Police Member, the Inspector with many Constables and 100 Military Police again appeared on the scene The Police tried to take Nitai in the car, but the women mass strongly objected to do so They set forth in their petition [2]

[2] Assault began with bayonet charge and of butts Three women and some men were wounded One Mahamadan boy was assaulted seriously without any concern [Sic]

To their great discontent, the women mass learnt on the next day (1st May) that Dulob Singh was released and kept in the Palace under His Highness's protection There were some questions for which the women strongly demanded to learn any concealed information

1 How did the Police Member the Inspector the Constables and the Military Police come so suddenly in the night of 29th April in the house of Dulob Singh (*Amin*)? Who could be the reporter and whether there were any written reports? By whose order did the Civil and Military forces combine in their execution of duties?

2 How the sentries of the State Military Police were kept in the house of Dulob Singh for the whole night of 29th April?

3 How did the Police Member the Inspector the Constables and the 100 Manipur State Police come to the Sadar Panchayet Court on 30th April? Who could be the reporter and what was the cause of the report?

4 Why was the assault with bayonet charge perpetrated on the unarmed men and women causing wounds to three women and some men? By whose order was the bayonet charge made against the women?

5 Why were the Civil and Military forces always employed together on every occasion of the women mass and who gave the order?

6 How could an under trial prisoner of the Sadar Panchayet Court be released so easily and kept in the Palace under the Maharaja s political shelter? And

7 Why had the Sadar Panchayet Court refused to accept a petition of Thambal on the same subject?

The women were utterly confused as to whom they should report against such grievances caused by the impolitic exercise of the State authority If the Political Agent would not interfere or decide their cases, the women said, they would have to stop to go to the State Courts for their cases They actually filed a case against Dulob and Nitai Singh in the Sadar Panchayet Court, but any one did not know how the case had gone to the Darbar Nitai Singh, in the meantime, filed another case against seven women of the mass stating "false facts" which he had not declared before the Sadar Panchayet Court However, the Darbar's sub-judicial treatment to the litigants was clearly shown when it issued orders saying that the seven defendant-women should not attend the temporary bazar till a final disposal of the case was made The angry crowd wrote in their petition [3]

We have never done anything wrong in the events of 29th and 30th April (1940) Still we were assaulted with bayonet charge and Your Honour is not prepared to take any enquiry into the matter The Police and the public are the same human beings who can feel pain and sorrows

"We request Your Honour for a kind interference by making necessary enquiries We have full belief that we shall never get any justifiable decision from the present Darbar *It is not desirable at all that our cases should go to the Darbar whom we have declared Unworthy* "

Some persons namely – Magho Singh, Banka Bihari Sharma, Tomchou Singh, Kashiram Sharma, Thambal, Sanatombi, Ibemhan, Kumari, Rajani and Ibemchaobi representing the Manipur public as the Appellants, filed a petition on 17th May 1940, to the Political Agent of Manipur appealing against the unconstitutional procedure in making decision by the Manipur State Darbar in Criminal Case No.4 of 1940, U/S 124A, I.P.C. An appeal of the above case, against the orders of the Darbar was duly preferred to His Highness in the Revisional Court showing the unconstitutional procedures followed by the Darbar in the case. But His Highness upheld the decisions of his Darbar and the appeal petition was rejected. The 'manoeuvring style' of the Darbar was clearly pointed out in *Criminal Appeal No.17* of 1939-40, submitted by Rajkumari Khomdonsana Devi for setting aside the order of His Highness confirming the order of conviction on Irabot under Section 124A of the *Indian Penal Code*:[4]

CRIMINAL APPEAL NO 17

(Vide Darbar Criminal Case No.4 of 1940)

"All the prosecution witnesses excepting No 5 (Mayanglambam Khomdon Singh of Malom) are State servants, of whom again the three other except No 3 (Laishram Yaimabi Singh, Officiating Subedar, S M P) are in the State Police Department Hence it must be that charge was concocted in between the prosecution witnesses themselves This is clear from the fact that they all deposed without variation that out of the whole speech of the appellant they each one memorized or recorded only the alleged portion on which the charge was based So there is sufficient scent of concoction here As they were all got up it is natural they should depose almost the same wordings as concerted between them Hence the charge should not be proved to have been established on the simple fact that all the prosecution witnesses made almost the same statements referred to above on which the Darbar based its judgement unless and until prosecution witnesses are found to be in agreement in all the points major or minor which their fabrication cannot be expected to have covered

"As the other prosecution witnesses are State servants, No 5 is the only independent who can be relied But this all important prosecution witness has proved himself unreliable and the P M S D , himself attached no importance to his statements

"Prosecution Witnesses No 2 and No 3 differed with each other in as much as the former said that the photograph was shown after the dark (*'The petromax was burning when the photograph was shown to the crowd I think the lamp was hung on a bamboo pole,'* Salam Tomba, P W No 2), while the latter said it was shown before the dark (*'The photograph was shown to the crowd before it became dark,'*- Laishram Yaimabi Singh, P W No 3) The prosecution witness No 4 must be an abnormal being whose statements

cannot be relied upon He said that the portion of the accuser s speech which he (P W No 4) had given in his statements were the exact words used by the accused He (P W No 4) had given most of the extracts from the speech in the order in which they were spoken P W No 4 said in spite of his confession that he made no record of the speech No one with ordinary human capacity can speak as the P W No 4 unless he undergoes a regular course of concoction

That there is a sufficient and obvious scent of concoction is evident from the fact that though P W No 5 asserted that he gave no thumb impression Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh (P W No 1) produced the alleged statements of P W No 5 under his thumb impression From this the Darbar should have known the underhand means adopted by the prosecution

That as the Darbar is the executive authority in the State they cannot be expected to dispose justice independently and unprejudicially in the present case especially where the State is the prosecutor

It is improper on the part of the State to make its subjects suffer injustice by not establishing an independent judiciary Under the circumstances the appellant begs most respectfully to request Your Honour to be gracious enough to set aside the Darbar s above orders and to release the appellant

Irabot had a belief that he could get no justice from the Darbar and so he requested the Maharaja to decide his case in the Revisional Court But the Maharaja refused to revise it and he simply dismissed the case on 6th May 1940 with a remark **"I see no reason to interfere with the orders passed by the Darbar. Appeal rejected."** The Political Agent also refused on the same ground *The case referred to is outside my jurisdiction The Courts having jurisdiction have disposed it of Petitioner informed*

(II)

There is no one really besides Your Highness and Your Darbar who can properly take charge of the situation — His Excellency the Governor of Assam (Mr R N Reid) to His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur

Sir Robert Neil Reid, His Excellency the Governor of Assam well knew that the State Administration of Manipur (both the Maharaja and his Darbar) was out of touch with its subjects, and that it was in great measure owing to its lack of "personal contact" that things were often drifted into semi-chaotic situation The agitators in fact had it their own way and nothing was done or said to counteract the subversive movement which was initiated If personal contact were re established the Maharaja and his Darbar could once more assume control of the situation, and, once the control was established it would have become easy to inquire into and remedy the alleged genuine grievances of the public The Governor therefore, asked the Maharaja

1 To make a determined effort to grapple with the situation before it got any worse

2 To accept His Highness's responsibility for the welfare of his subjects, and

3 To regain their confidence and to show that His Highness had their interest at heart and was ready to listen to their grievances

His Excellency further instructed the Maharaja that "*every effort should be made in consultation with the Darbar and His Highness should take counsel with them before he met his subjects* The Governor of Assam thus gave a wise political advice to His Highness on 18th May 1940[5]

I ask you to lose no time in summoning the Darbar to discuss the present situation and decide on means by which you can resume contact with the people and allay the present discontent After you have taken counsel with your Darbar I would earnestly request you to meet the leaders of the present agitation give them a patient hearing and if possible arrive at some mutual agreement Even if no agreement is arrived at you will at least have shown that you are anxious to acquaint yourself with your subjects feelings and to remedy their grievances

When His Excellency the Governor of Assam met Mr Gimson the Political Agent at Kohima on 12th May 1940, they had a full discussion on the problems of the agitation in Manipur The general feeling of the Political Agent was that so long as Chura Chand Maharaja was on the throne of Manipur there was no hope of any "real and lasting settlement" He felt that everyone in the State had completely lost confidence in His Highness and the Maharaja was also on bad terms with his Darbar and had little contact with them His Highness the Darbar and the State Military Police no doubt showed a cruel injustice in their public dispositions and on many occasions their inexpedient treatment towards the general mass was strongly protested by the poor aggrieved persons [To mention one instance] In March 1940 a gang of the State Military Police (Band Party) under the command of a *Havildar* came to Bishenpur on the evening of 27th February 1940 with six elephants of the Palace The party actually oppressed the whole village demanding *Forced Labour* from the starving public with the help of the members of Bishenpur Panchayet and the village *Chowkidars* to make temporary houses for His Highness who was said to be coming to Bishenpur Demands were made from the villagers to supply firewood plantain leaves, plantains and grass etc The oppression lasted for five days (including day and night) and arrests of people were made without rhyme

or reason On 2nd March, a very innocent old man (Thingujam Udhop Singh) of Bishenpur was arrested and assaulted, and later taken to the Palace for no reason which any one knew The poor villagers reported the matter to the President of the Darbar claiming that the action of the State Military Police was extremely unlawful and oppressive on the public However, the result of the appeal came to end in smoke'' The Secretary of the Bishenpur Branch Committee, Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha thus wrote to the President of the Darbar '

> The public position is not in safe The local authority of Bishenpur Panchayet instead of saving the public from the hands of the State oppressors helped them in the work of oppression Here before another gang party of Manipur Civil Police also oppressed the villagers on the same plea of His Highness's coming to Bishenpur [Sic]

Cries of protests against the socio religious impositions made by the Maharaja oppressions of the Darbar Members and the cruel treatment of the Civil and Military Police over the poor villagers spread far and wide Instead of sending in petitions to His Highness the Maharaja with requests to exempt the fines or taxes illegally taken from the villagers in former times, the people now submitted resolutions to the State authority by informing *their new stand against the age old customary practices* The Loitang Branch Committee of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha boldly asserted their firm determination to protest and to stop money payment for the following illegal practices

1 To stop from giving the fees called *Kumjan Sen* and in lieu of it to worship Gods and Goddesses with fruits and flowers

   [উমং লাইগী হৈন লৈন ফুমজনবা য়াবা এফমদা কাবসু নত্তনা "কুমজনশেন" হায়দুনা এবম চাদবা ফিস অমা লৌবিবা আস পিদবা লেপ্লবে। শেনগী এহৃদ লাইনিংথৌ, লাইবেম্মাশংগী পেননবগাদমক হৈন লৈন খুকমজবা লেপ্লবে।]

2 To stop from giving subscription for the *Barber*

   [পাজ নাপোং" চংদবা লমদা মবম ইচা চাদনা পাজ নাপেংকী শেনখায হায়দুনা লৌবিবা অসি পিদবা লেপ্লবে। এবম থিকববসু কবিসু লৈতবনি, পাজ হায়বনা পাও চেনবা আফিসনি, নাপেং হায়বনা শম্মচিংবা কোকপা আফিসনি। মাসগী অমুক অতোপ্পা শেনখায় পিনবা মবম কবিসু লৈতে।]

3 To stop from giving subscription for *Chandan*

   [চন্দন শেনখায়" পিনবা মবম কবিসু লৈতে; চন্দন থিনবগী অধিকাব দিক্ষা পিবা নুমিত্তা গুরুন অদুমক পিববনি, অধিকাব লৈনা থিল্লিবা চন্দন অদুগীদমক কনাদা শেনখায় অমুক পিবর্কিগদগে, "চন্দন শেনখায়" পিদবা লেপ্লবে।]

4 To stop from giving bribery for the removal from *Mangba* except *Prayaschit* according to *Shastras*

   [' ধর্ম্মগী মবমদা কবিগুম্বা দোষ অমা তৌকবগ শাস্ত্রগী হৌনবী মীনা তৌবা গুম্বা প্রায়শ্চিত নত্তবা মবম চাদনা মাংই হায়জিন্নগা মদুগীদমক শেংবিনবা শেন পিবা তেকপা লেপ্লবে।]

5 To stop from giving money to the *Pandit Loisang* for marriage
[লৌন, লৈনবগী মবমদা পন্দিত লোইশংদা শেনা পিজবা তোকপা লেপ্রবে।]

6 To stop from giving fees called *Kumsa* to the *Amins* annually
[লৌকশংগী আমিনশিংনা চহি খুদিংগী লৌ ওনসু শুন্দবদা হায়জিন্দুনা মবম ইচা চাদনা "কুমশা" হায়বা ফিস অমা লৌবিবা অসি পিদবা লেপ্রবে।]

The general public of Manipur were no longer interested in sending applications appeal petitions etc to the Maharaja the State Darbar or the Political Agent since they could not obtain a fair trial and justice from them, and instead they now prayed direct to His Excellency the Governor of Assam and the Viceroy & Governor-General of India for consideration and interference in the State administration The public had lost confidence and their moral obligations in His Highness, the Darbar and even the Political Agent who always sided with any decision of the State administration

Now therefore, the Manipur public collectively made an appeal petition to His Excellency the Governor of Assam in the first week of May 1940 against an order of the Darbar in putting nine (9) persons into jail during the pending of an appeal in the Revisional Court of His Highness The background to the petition was that the Manipur State Darbar passed an order to pay a fine of Rs 25 each or in default two weeks of rigorous imprisonment U S 188 of the I P C to ten (10) persons of a village in Yairipok for refusing to give forced labour Consequently an appeal was preferred to His Highness in the Revisional Court against the order of the Darbar which itself had already issued an order as far back as 1931 abolishing the system of forced labour and the imposition of new extra taxes in its place The previous Darbar Order of 1931 was read as follows

> Considered petitions complaining that the people are compelled to supply *Seba Sentry* and *Conveyance* to State servants
>
> The Darbar desire that the public should know that *Seba* and *Conveyance* have been completely abolished and that State servants may not demand such service from the people The practice of *Sentry* will continue as in the past for the Land Revenue Collection Staff for the present but all arrangements for its abolition are now under consideration

During the pending of appeal in His Highness s Revisional Court the Darbar took up the execution and put nine persons out of ten into jail on failure of payment of the fine *They were not heard in their defence* The Manipur public therefore preferred the appeal against the execution of the Darbar on the following grounds '

1 The appellants had to pay a Court fee of Rs 4 in the first appeal still pending for disposal and again the appellants paid another Court fee of Rs 4 in the same case It was expected that His Highness would issue an injunction order in time to stay the execution but that was not done Again the Darbar did not consider it necessary to wait for a decision of the appeal This resulted to the imprisonment of the nine persons rendering them to become helpless in both ways

2 Already in 1931 His Highness the Maharaja announced the abolition of the system of Forced Labour by a notice to the public and in its place new extra taxes were imposed It was therefore very surprising how the Darbar could re impose the dead custom in 1940 against its own standing order

3 The nine persons were made guilty of disobedience of order but the particular order which was said to have been disobeyed was never shown to the appellants It was also very doubtful whether any such orders been really issued or not Whereas the whole village refused to give forced labour they were not punished collectively but only the nine persons were made responsible for the action of the whole village The President of the Darbar called for the villagers who actually refused to give the forced labour but before a discussion was made with the villagers the Darbar issued their order [The Manipur public set forth in their appeal]

The Darbar is doing what they like The publics claim that the Members of the Darbar are very unworthy for administration The Constitution is *out of joint* and is found very strange in its nature The unhappy publics pray for a kind interference on failure of the Constitution *The Political Agent is doing nothing unless he can get order from the Supreme Power* [Sic]

The general public of Manipur further claimed that many undesirable oppressions were made by the State authorities unexpected and unlawful actions were taken every now and then against the public, in spite of a number of reports submitted to the Viceroy and the Governor of Assam the public could get no favourable enquiries the Civil and the Military forces were combined in their execution of duties against the public His Highness the Maharaja and the Darbar became anti-party to the public, the Constitution became blind to all, and the Political Agent did nothing to allay anything with a view to keep peace among the people In their appeal to the Viceroy & Governor-General of India, the public of Manipur claimed [10]

For the last time the public pray Your Excellency to interfere, and in case if His Excellency will not be so kind as to do so the helpless public will have nothing but to boycott the State Courts and in the result of which the authorities will send men after men into the jail The public will have to suffer that scene as there is no use of going to Court when Justice cannot be found there

(III)
A General View of the Situation
(Upto June 1940)

By the beginning of June 1940, the women s movement of Manipur appeared to have become moribund in its outlook At least five or six women tried desperately hard to hold meetings and collect crowds many times, but their only success was occasionally when there was a clash between the Loyalists' and the opposite party about the bazar and even then the numbers were small and men and boys were in the majority The main bazar was still deserted and the women vegetable and brass sellers sat on the roadsides in the State territory The cloth sellers did a good trade with the foreign shopkeepers by hawking their goods round instead of sitting in the bazar For a month or more before June there occurred no interference in the business But there was still an inclination not to buy any article from the foreigners There was now a party among the agitators themselves which was in favour of returning to the bazar and it was felt possible that they would come back as none of them really knew why they were out The only reasons given were the old cries about the failure to hold proper enquiries into

1 The bayonet charge of the 12 December
2 The case of the Inspector of Police of the 28 December
3 The riot of the 14th January
4 The case of Irabot U/S 124A I PC in Criminal Case No 4 of 1940
5 The case of the four women U/S 107 C PC in Criminal Case No 10 of 1940
6 The case of Kulabidhu Singh (member of the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni) and
7 The case of ten persons who refused to give forced labour to the State servants etc

Five of the leading women agitators were still in the jail but Tongbram Sabi Devi whom the Political Agent had convicted of escaping from lawful custody was released in the last week of May 1940 [On 23rd March 1940, Mr Gimson recorded "The two women who escaped from custody on the 21st were re arrested yesterday by the State Police I tried them (Leipaklei and Sabi) and sentenced them this morning for two months S I "] Sabi greeted the Political Agent in the street one evening in a very friendly manner It was thought significant by the State authorities that the Mahasabha Working Committee members met Sabi on her release from the jail but she appeared to be in peace at last

Viewing about the activities of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha Mr Gimson reported the following to His Excellency the Governor of Assam [11]

Until lately this has been active They hold meetings in the villages and enroll *badmashes* and malcontents The Mahasabha is the Congress organisation of Manipur It takes advice from outside but so far its officers and its adherents have been entirely Manipuri The Members go about spreading false rumours about orders passed or changes in personnel apparently more for the fun of the thing than with any particular object in view

Since the incident of the 14th January 1940 it became apparent that the Darbar and the Police had lost the initiative and did nothing to counter the rumours and propaganda of the Mahasabha The Political Agent constantly urged the Members to do some counter propaganda but either they did not think it necessary or they did not know how to set about it His Highness the Maharaja was not found very helpful and while he extremely disliked his Darbar Members he actually liked to be rid of them

The price of rice in Imphal fell slightly but the position in some of the villages had still causes of anxiety The stocks of paddy were probably enough but they were mostly in the hands of a few men and the poor villagers especially in the areas damaged last year by floods had not even seed paddy Those people with stocks tried hard to obtain more profit and they actually offered loans of seed paddy provided the borrowers undertook to pay after the harvest season four baskets of paddy for each basket which they took on loan On the whole there was enough rice in the valley to last to the next harvest but it was concentrated in a few hands only If there had been a real shortage the political situation in Manipur would have been in a much more serious condition

The cases which were likely to produce violent excitement were disposed of without much trouble and by the beginning of June 1940 the public generally began to ask what material benefit they had actually gained from the women s agitation The Political Agent thought that if the women had only returned to the bazar the movement would be over Since the stoppage of the export of rice and the closing of the rice mills there could not be found any clear reason for the continuance of the women s agitation The Political Agent thus concluded his report with a significant remark [1]

"If only His Highness the Maharaja had not forfeited the confidence of his people, it would not be difficult for him with the aid of the Darbar to re-establish confidence and to regain control As things are, I have little hope that they will"

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER TWELVE

Revival of Oppressive Measures by the State Authorities & Mock-Heroic Actions of Dulob and Nitai

1 See 'Petition' of the Manipur Public Men and Women to His Excellency the Viceroy & Governor-General of India, New Delhi, dated Imphal 3rd May 1940 sig. Kumari Devi, Rajani Devi, Magho Singh, Banka Bihari Sharma et al.

2 Petition submitted by the women mass of Manipur State to the Political Agent in Manipur State, dated 3rd May 1940

3 Petition' submitted by the women mass of Manipur State to the Political Agent Manipur, dated Imphal 7th May 1940

[*His Highness's Revisional Court*: In it the Maharaja had the power of remitting punishment, pardoning offenders and revising the decision of any Manipuri Criminal or Civil Court, subject to the approval of the Political Agent. Appeals from the Panchayet Courts (both Rural and Sadar) lay to the Cherap Court and appeals from the Cherap Court to the Darbar. Dissatisfied litigants often appealed to His Highness's Revisional Court. There was no bar to second appeals.]

4 'Appeal Petition' of Hijam Irabot Singh, Prisoner State Jail through the Supdt. of State Jail to His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur, K.C.S.I., C.B.E. (n.d.)

5 Rf. to D.O. No. 52 C., dated 18th May 1940 from His Excellency the Governor of Assam (Mr. R. N. Reid) to His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur

6 See Khaidem Rotho Singh, Secretary, Bishenpur Branch Committee N.M.M., to the President, Manipur State Darbar, dated 3rd March 1940

7 Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha (Loitang Branch Committee), President, Khuraijam Sanahongba Singh to the President, M.S.D., dated 31st March 1940 Re: Memo No. 175 N.M.M. dated 14th June 1940

8 See Manipur State Darbar Resolution No. 1A of 28th October 1931

9 'Petition' submitted by the Manipur public to His Excellency the Governor of Assam, Shillong, 3rd May 1940, sig. Ibomcha, G. Gourakishore, Bishwarup, Bidur Singh Kanhai Singh et al.

10 'Appeal Petition' Against Oppressions by the State Authorities, submitted by the Manipur public (Appellants) to His Excellency the Viceroy & Governor-General of India, dated Imphal 24th May 1940

11 D.O. Letter No. 505 (Confidential) from C. Gimson, Political Agent in Manipur to J.P. Mills Esq. I.C.S., Secretary to the Governor of Assam, Imphal 1st June 1940

12 Rf. Op. Cit.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

(I)

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;"– W.B. Yeats

**

A Scenario of the Khwairamban Bazar.

By the end of June 1940, the general mass of Manipur felt extremely aggrieved that although the agitation had lasted more than seven months, not a single demand of the public was properly dealt with by the higher authority to smoothen the minds of the people. The women now realised that they were the great losers by stopping the daily bazar. But still the public could not find the 'proper authority' who could enquire into and decide the unlawful actions, which were alleged to have been committed by His Highness the Maharaja, the State Darbar and the combined force of the Police and Military staffs upon the unarmed and helpless people of the State. The Political Agent openly refused to do anything until he could get specific orders from the Viceroy; and, as early as 12th March 1940, His Excellency the Governor of Assam had already expressed that he "was not prepared to interfere in the administration of the Manipur State." [See Letter No.184 C.S.C., dated 12th March 1940 from H.E. the Governor of Assam to the P.A. in Manipur.] Members of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the public were made victims in the hands of the Police; and Darbar always framed their 'sentence of convictions' through the *underhand reports* submitted by the Police.

Though a large number of women still boycotted the bazar in the British Reserve, the situation in Manipur became somewhat quiet by the middle of July 1940. The Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha, in the meantime, decided to acquaint with the All India State Peoples' Federation with the political situation in Manipur, and to urge them to take up the cause of the Manipur subjects. The leaders of the Mahasabha thus proposed to intensify the agitation for the fulfillment of the following public demands:[1]

1 "A complete stoppage of the rice export business from Manipur,

2 "Trial of the State officials and Police who assaulted and wounded the Manipuri women, and

3 'Introduction of Responsible Government in the State

The Political Agent, on seeing the bleak prospect and the unpromising attendance of the bazar women in the daily market, now made a new arrangement for the women's seats in the bazar. The Notification of the Political Agent was issued on 23rd August 1940 but it was of course a mock warning to the bazar women to make them extremely anxious of their nearly losing privilege of possessing the bazar seats. The Notice was issued under the following

"খাইবম্বন্দ কৈথেলদা ফম্বী নুপী পুম্নমক্না মতম কিনা মফম অসিদা (অমদা) খাইবম্বন্দ কৈথেলদা ফমগে হায়না নিংবা তৌদ্রে। নোটিশ অসিনা খংহল্লিবাদ ঐনা ফমহন্নিংবা মীবু ফমহনগে হায়না নিংলে।

"মবম অসিনা হায়নগী পোৎফম ফম্বীশিংনা অমুক হন্না হল্লক্লুনা ফমনিংলবদি, ওসিদগী থা অমগী মনুংদা ঐভোন্দা দবখাষ্ট থাগদবনি।"

ইতি

২৩ আগষ্ট, ১৯৪০ ইং

As a protest against the above notice the women put up their arguments to the Political Agent that

1 They had absolutely no intention to stop going to the bazar forever

2 The agitation was continued as a protest against the State authorities and their indifference to the women's just and legal grievances

3 His Highness the Maharaja was not yet prepared to decide the cases preferred by the women in spite of their repeated prayers and

4 The Darbar and the Police staff had oppressed and prosecuted many women in every possible way in utter violation of Law and Justice for no fault of theirs

For these cases of unjust harassment the women could find no form of redress at the hands of the State authorities. The women said they were much aggrieved to learn that the Political Agent took the situation in a different light and that he too intended to deprive the women of a right' which they were enjoying for the last forty years or more. The Political Agent however could not understand what the women petitioners actually wanted him to do. He therefore made an appeal to the women to be more explicit in their claims on the bazar seats. Some of the leading women agitators viz Kumari of Sagolband Rajani of Sagolband Maipakpi of Thangmeiband, Sanatombi of Brahmapur, Nganbi of Segalambi, Ibemhan of Janmasthan and Ibemhan of Nongmeibung etc were unfortunately misguided by members of the Mahasabha and the Manipur Praja Sanmiloni in their demand about the

bazar seats In their petition dated 25th September 1940 which was submitted to the Political Agent the above-mentioned women [without concern] reiterated the old demands of the public which still remained unfulfilled In fact the petition and the points raised therein had nothing to do with the question of the bazar seats at all The women set forth some allegations inter alia

1 The agitation of the 12th December 1939 was started due to the inability of the Darbar to stop the rice export even for two or three days in emergency cases without the permission of His Highness the Maharaja All the Darbar Members except the President (Mr J A Sharpe) had fled like cowards by the back doors of the Darbar Hall without passing any order to the public

2 The Inspector of Police had kicked a Manipuri woman called Longbram Sabi Devi before the mass and he also called (using obscene Manipuri) bad names to the women while there was no offence from the latter The Darbar however decided the case in favour of the Inspector and thus he was set free without any punishment or blame The eye witness evidence of hundreds of women was thus made utterly meaningless

3 Dulob Singh (*Amin*) assaulted two women of the temporary bazar at Uripok and he looted the money with purse from the women The Darbar again decided the case in favour of Dulob Singh who was put to *Hajat* at first by the Sadar Panchayet Court but was found in the Palace next day without any appeal It was very surprising how the case went on to the Darbar from the Sadar Panchayet Court

4 The four women *viz* Wahengbam Tongkhombi Nongthombam Khongnan Oinam Mukhi and Chongam Ongbi Amubi were made responsible for the works of the whole mass The agitation had still continued in their absence too so they could not be said to be responsible *They had no power to stop the movement or to continue it*

5 Irabot was kept in the jail on a sedition charge while there was no sedition and

6 The assemblage (s) of 14 January 1940 in the Police Bazar were dispersing themselves when the Subedar Major of the Manipur State Police informed them the order of His Highness not to hold any political meeting *No meeting was ever held on that day but the men and the women were assaulted by the Civil and Military Police without an offence from the public*

The women said that although the Darbar was considered an authoritative soul of the public' it certainly oppressed the people, while having itself (the Darbar) NO DEFINITE AND ACCEPTABLE CONSTITUTION They further claimed that if their grievances (in the light of the above points) were redressed, they would make no delay in attending the daily bazar as usual

Four days after the expiry of the Notice of 23rd August 1940 the Political Agent made another announcement on 27th September against

the spirit of the women's appeal petition above cited The second notification had aroused disgust and female scorn against the Political Agent and it was issued as follows

"নোটিশ অসিনা মবম ওইদুনা মী পুম্নমক্তা খংতল্লি। মাদুদি খাইবন্দ কৈথেল মনুংদা ফম্নিংবা মীগী মখৈ শ্রীযুক্ত পোলিটিকেল এজেন্ট সাহেবকী মফমদা থা অমগী মনুংদা দবখাষ্ট থাখো হায়না তাং ২৩ আগষ্ট, ১৯৪০ সালদা নোটিশ তৌখিবা অদুগী মতম হেনগ্রে. মবম অসিনা মমাংবৈদা পাল্লম্না পোংফমগী মীং পুম্নমক ককহংলে। মদুগা অমুক ইনৌ নৌনা পোংফম শিল্লগনি। খুজিক্তি হায়খিবা নোটিশ অদুগী মতুংইন্না থা অমগী মনুংদা দবখাষ্ট থাগ্রবা মীশিং মখোগী পোংফম হায়না থৌবাং তৌবগনি, অসিগী মথংদা ওসিদগী হৌনা তাং ৪ ওক্তোবব ১৯৪০ সালগী মনুংদা ফমগে ফমগে হায়বা মী মখোসু অনৌনা দবখাষ্ট থাববা যাগনি।"

ইতি তাং ২৭। ৯। ১৯৪০ ইং পোলিটিকেল এজেন্ট ইন মণিপুর

Immediately after the issue of the above Notice the women sent reports to the Viceroy of India and the Governor of Assam saying that the Political Agent did not show the least favour to the women concerning the agitation which had lasted more than ten months They also alleged that the Political Agent, on the contrary was prepared to make new arrangements of their seats in the bazar by giving away the seats to their anti parties who were labouring against the agitators through the help of the Maharaja and the State authorities The women therefore requested the Viceroy and the Governor to stay the order of the "new arrangement" for some time[4] The steps which were actually taken up by the Political Agent as to the arrangement of the new seats in the main bazar, were as follows

His Highness the Maharaja was at first requested to hand over to the Political Agent the list of those entitled to seats in the bazar, and it was proposed to dispose of all the suits in connection with the bazar seats in the State Courts The Darbar resolution No 15 of 23rd February 1940 was passed accordingly In April 1940, His Highness the Maharaja was asked again if he would be in favour of issuing a Notice for the re-settlement of seats in the bazar and he agreed to it On 23rd August the Political Agent issued a general notice for allotting seats to whomsoever he might choose and the previous holders were given one month's time to file applications to the Political Agent if they wished to return to their seats Again, on 27th September 1940, another notice was issued by the Political Agent calling for applications for settlement which would be received upto 4th October, and it said that those who had already filed applications to retain their seats, would be given the first choice

The Khwairamban bazar was the only important and the main trade centre of the whole population of the Imphal valley. Exchange of buying and selling was done in the bazar, and many people depended their existence on the food and vegetables sold by the women in the bazar. But the sanitary condition of the market and the occupants remained the same for a number of years, without change and improvement. The following description of the bazar from an eyewitness account in the year 1894 would fairly make a good comparison with another account of the same place given in 1940. The first Christian Missionary in Manipur, Reverend William Pettigrew in July 1894, depicted the scenes of the market place and the condition of the female occupants.

"The Bengalis are few in number but there is a likelihood of increase as their countrymen in Cachar are finding out that this is a cheap place to live in rice selling at Rs 1-8 and Rs 2 per maund all the year round. They have a small bazaar [Sic] consisting of two rows of shops, some of them built with two storeys similar to those at Darjeeling. That inveterate traveller, the *Kabuli* is here also with his inevitable bundle.

The Manipuris attracted my attention the most particularly on the following day after my arrival. I went to the bazaar, where I saw a sight, which gave me some idea of the number of Manipuris about here. Just outside the west entrance of the Raja's enclosure, on both sides of the main road was seated, or rather squatted in long rows a great number of Manipuri women. I calculated about 3,000 squatted thus, selling their wares, consisting chiefly of rice, fish, various kinds of cloth, baskets and brass wares &c.

"On the outskirts of the bazaar, a number of Naga women selling firewood were also seen. I thought this must be a *Mela*, or something extraordinary, but I was surprised to find that this is a daily sight. Many of these collections of women are to be found throughout the valley, but the principal meeting place is in the capital. There is no attempt in any of the market places, at the erection of shelter of any kind, and the women remain exposed to rain or sun, as the case may be. [*We are still suffering in rains and sun etc in the Temporary Bazar due to unsettlement of our grievances by the Political Agent and His Highness* Women mass of Manipur, 18th November 1940]

"Before the rebellion in 1891, the men, with the exception of foreigners, were not allowed to enter the market places but evidently that rule is relaxing gradually. All the buying and selling is conducted by women."

Exactly after 46 years, the Khwairamban Bazar in the British Reserve was still considered the most important Manipuri market in the State. It was occupied entirely by women who sat there everyday from 4 or 5 p.m. to nearly midnight. The better part of the bazar consisted of raised plinths covered by C.I. roofs, but a large number of women also used to sit in the open air outside the sheds. They sold nearly all the local produce of Manipur – rice, vegetables, tobacco, fish (both fresh and dried), salt, oils, mats, baskets, clothes, pots, rag dolls, local slippers, coconuts,

brass wares, trinkets and a host of other things The Political Agent always ruled that those who sat outside the sheds had no rights in their seats - first comers having the first claim, but in fact, hundreds occupied the same seats for years and there was serious trouble for any one who tried to dispossess them Although it was recognised that those who sat "inside the sheds" had some rights, those rights were never defined No Political Agent admitted that occupiers had any 'permanent rights' in their seats and in 1920, when there was a temporary boycott of the bazar, Mr L O Clarke, the Political Agent had settled outsiders in some of the vacated seats

In 1913 a list of the occupiers was prepared under the instruction of the Judicial Member and the list was kept in the Cherap Court, which disposed of cases filed about seats in the bazar Seats were normally handed down from mother to daughter, but the Cherap Court also allowed transfers by sale or other means The bazar being within the British Reserve was under the jurisdiction of the Political Agent, and it was found surprising why the Cherap Court disposed of the cases Probably it was because of the fact that the previous Political Agents did not like to be concerned with petty disputes among the Manipuri women In February 1940, with the concurrence of His Highness the Maharaja and the Darbar, the Political Agent took over the list from the Cherap Court, and he arranged that any cases about the bazar seats would be disposed of in the Political Agent's Court However, the list was sadly out of date, and very few of the names recorded being those of the existing occupiers The women paid no rent or tolls Over 2,000 women used to sit "inside the sheds", and probably twice as many outside[11]

The bazar boycott had actually begun on the 12th December 1939 immediately after the women were forcibly removed from the Telegraph Office compound by the Assam Rifles troops The incident was at once followed by a violent campaign against the owners of the rice-mills and the other foreign merchants in the Imphal valley who controlled nearly all the export trade in Manipur In origin it was a spontaneous protest against what was called the "Bayonet Charge", and it continued as an attempt at an economic boycott of the bazar merchants For a month or so, the boycott was almost complete After that a few women began to sell clothes etc to the merchants at their shops, but the few who attempted to sit in the women's bazar were soon persuaded to move by the women agitators It was evident that the women leaders of the movement were certainly instructed by members of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha, which in its turn was advised by the Assam Congress Committee

In March 1940 four of the most dangerous women leaders (C Gimson) viz Tongkhombi, Khongnang Mukhi and Amubi were arrested and called on to give security As they failed to do so the Darbar sent them to jail Others took their places but the new leaders were considered to be of small influence and reputation But somehow they kept the bazar boycott in force by unscrupulous methods of indecent abuse and threats against those who tried to do trade in the bazar About 50 bold spirits defied them and sat regularly in the bazar but the great majorities were intimidated By this time no attempt was made to interfere with private sales at the merchants shops where a large trade was freely done

The situation was found at nearly normal again by June 1940 except that the women s bazar was still almost empty Those who used to sit in the bazar were sitting and went on their trade on the roadsides just outside the British Reserve The Darbar did not approve of this but as the Police force was not strong enough to take control of the situation it made no attempt to remove the women The new women leaders who played merely for their own hands had very little success in their attempts to hold protest meetings and to stir up trouble It became clear by the end of August 1940 that there was no longer any enthusiasm for the bazar boycott and thus the Political Agent issued a Notice on 23rd August to the effect that as the seats were vacated for so long he would allot them to anyone he chose He added that if the previous holders wished to return to their seats they must file an application to him This created some slight excitement but it did not bring back the women It did however, show clearly that large numbers of other women were anxious to take up seats in the bazar and that they would defend themselves against any aggressors Some new comers came in and began to trade The Political Agent still did not make a new settlement because it was obviously desirable that the old occupiers should come back of their own accord He also knew that by allotting their seats to others it would lead to years of ill feeling and resentment towards the successive Political Agents in Manipur

Gradually more outsiders came in and by the beginning of February 1941 there were 400 or 500 women sitting regularly Before the end of the month the old occupiers took alarm and suddenly they pocketed their pride and poured in applications to be allowed to resume their seats Actually petitions came from hundreds of new applicants as well as from the old sitters and for a few days there was a vigorous scramble with many minor tussles between the parties There occurred no serious conflicts however, and no damage was done

The Political Agent had a new Register of Seats and he allowed all the old occupiers to retain their seats provided they had applied for

permission to do so When the new settlement was completed the women were informed that they might not transfer their seats without the permission of the Political Agent, and if they vacated the seats, he would allot them to others On seeing the sudden change of the women s aptitude arising out of the bazar boycott, Mr Gimson recorded the following '

> It has been a surprise to everyone that the boycott lasted so long especially as the reasons for its continuance are obscure even to the women themselves Economic distress or political excitement may lead the women of Manipur to take up other forms of agitation as they have in the past but I think that this time they have learnt that *their best interests lie inside and not outside the Khwairamban Bazar*

From time to time the women leaders said that they would not return to the bazar until their grievances were removed In private they made bitter remarks about His Highness the Maharaja and his rule When the enquiries were completed the women were not satisfied but it was quite clear from even the early days of the movement that few members of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha were fishing in the troubled waters and that the women leaders were wholly dependent on them[11]

SOURCE AND REFERENCE

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A Scenario of the Khwairamban Bazar

1 RE to Secret Memo No 507 C dated Shillong the 31 July 1940 from I P Mills Esq Secretary to H E the Governor of Assam Shillong to C Gimson Esq I C S Political Agent in Manipur Imphal [Enclosure Statement of C A 12 dated 10 July 1940]

2 See Petition dated 4 September 1940 filed by Kumari of Sagolband Ibemhan of Nongmeibung et al to the Political Agent in Manipur

3 Petition dated 25 September 1940 filed by Kumari Rajani Maipakpi Sanatombi et al to the Political Agent of Manipur

4 Petition to H E the Viceroy & Governor General of India (Simla) and H E the Governor of Assam (Shillong) dated 21 October 1940 sig R K Sanatombi Kumari Rajani Maipakpi Ibemton Ibemhan et al

5 See Revd Champhang Jajo Comp *Reverend William Pettigrew s Mission Reports and Letters 1891 1932 Manipur The Bond 13 July 1894* Ukhrul India p 7 (n d)

6 Confidential D O Letter No 5660 G A dated Imphal 21 March 1941 from C Gimson Political Agent in Manipur to I P Mills Secretary to H E the Governor of Assam

CONCLUSION

Though the immediate causes of the Women's War were economic in origin, there was also a strong feeling of discontent with the State administration The disturbances known as the Nupi Lan, which took place in Imphal during the winter of 1939 brought to a head the question of introducing reforms into the Manipur State The first request for the introduction of reforms was made as early as November 1938 when the Maharaja received a petition signed by 356 members of the public asking for the setting up of a Legislative Council Next year in November 1939 Irabot as the President of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha again submitted an outline of the Legislature to His Highness the Maharaja *for necessary actions so that the legitimate rights of the people may be secured and the grievances redressed* [See Memo No 124 N M M from H Irabot Singh President N M M to H H the Maharaja of Manipur, dated 2nd October 1939] The Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha had weighed in the following demands (which were sardonically termed as *this somewhat unrealistic contribution* (Gimson) for speedy reforms in the State administration

1 A Unicameral Legislature of 100 members 80 to be elected and 20 to be nominated by the Maharaja

2 Voting by ballot no communal electorates electors to be literate or taxpayers or both

3 A bill to become Law if passed by His Highness who would otherwise refer it back to the Legislature

4 The Legislature to pass the budget the Civil List to be in a fixed proportion to the State s revenues

5 The Maharaja to ask the leader of the largest party in the Legislature to be the Prime Minister

6 The Maharaja to choose 3 Cabinet Ministers who with him would have joint responsibility to the Legislature

7 The Maharaja to appoint 4 more Ministers whose responsibility would be individual and

8 The Maharaja to set up a Constituent Assembly

While delaying a further consideration on the above-proposed reforms, the sudden outbreak of the Nupi Lan in December had brought more emphasis on the crying need of the reforms in the State The

"War", which was started as an agitation (in the first) by the bazar women of Imphal against the export of rice, was gradually taken over by the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and by it used as a tool for fermenting the agitation on the Congress lines[11] When His Highness the Maharaja asked the Darbar "to devise measures for checking the unrest", the President of the Darbar sent in the following suggestions in March 1939

1. The sale of the State's property in British India
2. The abolition of the budget grant for temples pujas and ceremonies
3. Halving of the strength of the State Military Police
4. Reductions in the staff of the Palace Office and His Highness's Revisional Court
5. Reductions in the Members and staff of the Cherap and Sadar Panchayet Courts and
6. Reductions in His Highness's allowances

The Manipur State Darbar however, rejected the idea of a Council and the Members set to work to frame their own proposals for reforms They produced their 'agreed suggestions" as follows, which of course envisaged the creation of a Legislative Assembly

1. A permanent President of the Darbar
2. A Chief Judge (sitting with two Darbar Members) to form a Chief Court
3. Replacement of the Cherap and the Sadar Panchayet Courts by Manipuri Magistrates
4. Codification of Manipuri laws and customs
5. Admission of pleaders into the State Courts
6. Training of the Police Member and the Inspector of Police in British India and
7. The administration of the Hill tribes by the Maharaja direct through the Darbar

The Political Agent also agreed that frequent changes of the Darbar President were most undesirable But he considered that *the real need was less for the constitutional than for the administrative reform and that Manipur was not yet ripe for democracy*[11] According to him the three main causes of discontent and restlessness among the public were the *Mangba Sengba* scandal, the dilatoriness of the lower Courts of justice and the public's lack of confidence in them, and the deplorable state of the land records He was of opinion that only the measures of reform on the lines suggested by the President of the Darbar (as stated above) would remove the causes of agitation, and *funds could only be*

found by reductions under heads of expenditure with which the Maharaja was personally concerned

While the women's agitation had still continued His Highness the Maharaja was asked for "his own suggestions" as to the reforms needed to help alleviate the public's grievance As a result in April 1940 the Maharaja produced "his suggestions" which provided for authority to be exercised by His Highness directly or through the Ministers chosen by him The suggestions included

1. An I C S Prime Minister responsible to His Highness for finance revenue and general supervision
2. His Highness to have special responsibilities for peace tranquility and good government
3. The setting up of a State Legislative Assembly consisting of the Prime Minister and 27 members (16 elected and 9 nominated)
4. His Highness to pass the budget and forward it to H E the Governor
5. The State Military Police to remain under His Highness's control
6. A European Police Officer to train the Civil Police
7. His Highness (in the event of a breakdown) to assume all powers and issue Ordinances and
8. The creation of a Chief Court

It was felt extremely doubtful whether the above proposals that merely increased the Maharaja's powers without reducing his allowances would in the least allay the public clamour for reform His Highness's proposals were considered by H E the Agent to the Crown Representative and finally in November 1940, orders were received laying down the reforms which were considered necessary urgently They were

- *Creation of a Chief Court*
- *Preparations for a re survey and re settlement of the valley*
- *Appointment of a Superintendent of Police from Assam*
- *Construction and manning of new Police Stations*
- *Replacement of the State Military Police (S M P) by an armed branch of the Civil Police*
- *To meet the cost of reforms from reductions of*

Rs	4 000	(His Highness's personal contingencies)
Rs	9 200	(grants for temples *pujas* and ceremonies)
Rs	9 400	(allowances to Rajkumars)
Rs	3 200	(His Highness's Office establishment) and
Rs	36 000	(disbanding the State Military Police)
Rs	61 800	

Finally, His Highness the Maharaja was informed that in accordance with the orders of the Crown Representative he must initiate the above specified reforms in the Manipur State. In January 1941, the Maharaja made his comments that he had no objection to the proposed reduction in the Rajkumars' allowances, but he was strongly opposed to any reduction in his personal contingencies in the grant for temples, *pujas* and ceremonies or in the strength of his Palace Office and Court staff. But His Excellency the Governor showed his regrets that he could not reconsider his decision as to the reduction of the Maharaja's Civil List and the reductions were, therefore incorporated in the budget of the year 1941-1942.

The Women's War disturbed the peace and tranquility of the whole Imphal valley in 1939-40 but all the Manipuri women had returned to the main bazar (Khwairamban) in the British Reserve in February 1941. On 13th September 1941 His Highness Sir Chura Chand Singh, K.C.S.I., C.B.I., the Maharaja of Manipur completed his 50 years of reign on the Manipur *Gadi* and he announced his intention to abdicate as he suffered from tuberculosis, but before this could be arranged he died in Nabadwip on 6th November 1941.

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CHRONOLOGY

1891 27th April Manipur was occupied by the three Columns from Kohima Silchar and Tammu

1891 21 August Regrant of Manipur State was notified in *The Gazette of India* No 1700I

1891 13 September Received telegram from Secretary to the Government of India in Foreign Department appointing Chura Chand to be the Raja of Manipur

1891 15 September Accompanied by two leading Manipuris H St P Maxwell [P A] went to the house where Chura Chand was living with his mother and

grandfather On arrival Maxwell was met by the whole family and explained the purport of his visit A crowd having collected Maxwell took up the boy and informed the assembled that there was their Raja and many persons went there and paid obeisance to him Maxwell appointed the mother and natural grandfather named Ramananda Singh to be guardians of the minor Raja *The family was living in very humble circumstances* [H St P Maxwell]

1891 18th September Selection of Chura Chand as Raja of Manipur in Notification No 1862I

1891 29th September Maxwell leveled off a good plot of land to the west of the Polo ground for a Sadar Bazar and marked on it 28 sites for shops [15 sites had already been disposed of]

1891 8th October Maxwell found the money token of the country to be a small bell metal coin of the size of a 2 Anna piece of which the value was 1 400th of a rupee Barter was the mode of trade and there was very little money in circulation Maxwell wired to the General Commanding Eastern Frontier asking if the Commissariat Department would like to purchase 40 to 60 000 pounds of *dhan* for the consumption of troops and followers at Manipur and Kohima

1891 9 October An examination of the accounts of the *Lourung Shang* [Revenue Office of the Darbar] showed that Raja s receipts for the year 1890 1891 from land revenue were 85 000 maunds of dhan About half the receipts were intercepted by revenue officials and the other half of the dhan was consumed by the Raja and his followers

1891 30th November [Settlement of Chawkidars Beats for the Imphal Town] Maxwell found that the number of houses was 7125 and villages 338 He divided the town into 53 Circles or Chawkidars Beats

1892 1 March Sel a small bell metal coin issued from the State mint and formerly valued at 400 for the rupee but which like the rupee continued its downward course now valued at 800 the rupee owing chiefly to false coining

1892 29 April Chura Chand was installed by the Political Agent (Major Maxwell) as Raja and recognised as a tributary prince

1892 29th April The abolition of Slavery termination of *Lalup* institution of a House Tax @ Rs 2 per house per annum and establishment of Land Revenue @ Rs 5 per *pari* announced

1892 25th May Maxwell received the news that Her Majesty had appointed him to be a COMPANION OF THE STAR OF INDIA

1892 5 October Rajkumari Sanatombi daughter of Maharaja Surchandra Singh married to H St P Maxwell

1893 1 May A system of Court Fees was introduced in cases in Superintendent of the State s Court

1894 27th July An enterprising trader in the Sadar Bazar got up a large consignment of blue glass spectacles and *the Imphal town had quite a learned appearance*

1894 9th November Megzing Singh son of late Raja Nar Singh who was exiled for some years at Hazaribagh and later released arrived at Manipur and reported himself to the Political Agent for orders

1895 11th January Barachaoba and his son Sanahal reported their arrival at Manipur from Hazaribagh

1895 31 January The price of the betel nut at Lakhipur was 1 050 per rupee and the Manipur sale price was 220 per rupee

1895 10[th] May [So much quarrelling among the old women at the daily bazar regarding seats has taken place lately that I am having the stalls numbered and names of occupants registered On the whole they don t approve of this preferring I believe to quarrel but that is all very well for the old women who have little or nothing to occupy their time I strongly object to be constantly worried with their complaints Another serious trouble just now which is the marriage season is connected with the rules of precedence Everyone wishes to occupy the seat of honour at these feasts and the success of the proceedings is generally marred by an unseemly dispute Women here are again at the bottom of the trouble]

1895 20[th] May [The evening bazar held outside the west entrance to the Pat is rendered most noisesome by the smell of dried fish and I must arrange for a fish market in some other place The Tangkhul Nagas who readily eat putrid flesh and will sleep comfortably with a basket of dried fish under their noses say that milk and butter smell so horribly they are unable to approach them and I am inclined to think there are noses and noses In this connection however I have seen natives of British India bandage up their nostrils as they pass the fish stalls at the evening bazar]

1895 8 June There was some trouble during the week on the question of cow killing owing to the Id The Muhammadans wanted to kill in public in front of the mosque to which the Hindus objected and further desired the issue of a prohibition to kill at all The Political Agent ordered that no animal was to be killed in public but only after dark and then in Muhammadan quarters only

1895 23 June Sir James Johnstone late Political Agent in Manipur died from a riding accident He was much loved by the Manipuris and the British subjects in Manipur

1895 29[th] June The minor Raja s mother wanted to know what allowance she was to receive while the Raja was away

1895 16 July Minor Raja Chura Chand and his half brother Rajkumar Digendra Singh left Manipur for the Mayo College at Ajmere Reached the College on 5[th] August

1895 14[th] October Construction started for the new Primary School at Thokchom Leikai

1895 16[th] October Construction started for the new Primary School at Tera Keithel

1896 15 June [Rice is 6 rupees a maund and the poorer people have already commenced to partly subsist on jungle produce Am advised to stop the export of rice to Kohima and that then the price will fall It is true that when a demand comes from Kohima for rice the market price for the next few days rises and does not again fall to the old price and in this way the onward tendency is most marked But I also notice that in the time of the late Darbar the sale of rice in Imphal was restricted to a certain class of women and that these women try and keep the sale in their own hands They warn intruders off the course and invent all kinds of punishments to be inflicted on persons evading the custom The credulity of the people is simply astonishing and though in some respects extremely shrewd in other respects they are foolish to a degree In order to corner the rice trade the villagers outside Imphal have been told that the

Political Agent prohibits their selling rice in the town and this enable the Imphal rice sellers to force the price In the same way rumour has it that the demand for rice has diminished when it really is in a strained condition and so it goes on I hope when the rain comes and the people see that the next crop of *dhan* is assured the price of rice will fall to it normal rate]

1901 March Census population of Manipur (2 84 465)

1902 6 December His Highness left Imphal to attend the Delhi Darbar

1904 15th March The State *Bungalow* in the occupation of Captain Nuttall (Tutor to His Highness) and M Dunlop Assistant Political Agent was burnt to the ground

1904 6th July The Khwairamban Bazar containing 28 sheds with seats for 3 000 market women was completely destroyed by fire

1904 4 August The State *Bungalow* (again in the occupation of Captain Nuttall and Mr Dunlop) was totally destroyed by fire

1905 17 March His Highness the Raja was married with Ngangbam Ibemcha Devi

1905 (May His Highness joined the Imperial Cadet Corps at Dehra Dun

190 15 May The Government of the State was made over to the Raja and the Darbar

1908 February His Highness the Raja was formally installed on the Manipur *Gadi* by Sir Lancelot Hare Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam

1908 March His Highness the Raja married a second wife called Chingakham Shyamasakhi Devi (In the same year he married another woman called Ngangbam Priyosakhi Devi)

1911 March Census population of Manipur (3 46 323)

1911 19th October His Highness the Raja left Imphal for Delhi to be present at the Imperial Darbar

1912 1913 His Highness the Raja married two Manipuri women called Chongtham Chetnamanjuri Devi and Haobam Lilabati Devi widespread agitation against the *Pothang* system occurred

1913 9th June Proclamation for the abolition of *Pothang* issued and the imposition of new extra taxes

1913 1 July The water works in Manipur first opened by His Highness the Raja

1916 His Excellency the Viceroy accepted the Raja s offer for sending a Double Company to Lansdowne *Game Rules of the Manipur State* introduced in Manipur *Rules for the Administration of the Manipur State* were revised by Government His Highness the Raja relinquished the Presidency of the Manipur State Darbar

1916 October The most disastrous flood that has occurred in Manipur within the memory of men

1917 His Highness Raja Chura Chand Singh invested with C B E (*Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire*) and the title of Maharaja as a hereditary distinction in connection with the War Service [See also 1 January 1918]

1917 December Unrest among the Kukis under the instigation of Manipuri pretender Chingakham Sanajaoba Singh

1919 Opening of 3 new Sub Divisions at Churachandpur Tamenglong and Ukhrul

1919 October Open Darbar at the Manipur Palace and the announcement of certain financial concessions to Manipur by the Hon ble Chief Commissioner of Assam (Sir Nicholas Dodd Beatson Bell)

1921 Census population of Manipur State (3 84 016)

1921 August Marwari merchants of the Imphal bazar distributed free rice to enormous crowds of Manipuris at the Polo Ground

1925 2nd February His Highness the Raja married a new wife (6th) named Maisnam Subadani Devi

1925 1926 His Highness bought a residence for Rs 85 000 (*English* House at Shillong) Marwari merchants contributed Rs 4 000 to the Imphal Civil Hospital

1926 1927 Raghunath Rai Agarwala a generous Marwari contributed Rs 5 000 towards the construction of the Operation Room in the Imphal Civil Hospital

1927 29 July Khomdram Dhanachandra Singh (an alleged Police criminal by the women mass of Manipur) appointed Inspector of Police

1930 1 April Hijam Irabot Singh appointed Member of the Sadar Panchayet Court

1930 25 October Electric current was switched on in Imphal for the first time

1931 Census population of the Manipur State (4 45 606)

1931 6 January His Excellency the Viceroy of India visited Manipur

1931 29 August Jadonang Kabui was hanged at the Imphal Jail in the morning

1934 January His Highness was distinguished by being created a K C S I (*Knight Commander of the Star of India*)

1934 30th May 1 Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha held at Imphal

1936 30th January 2nd Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha held at Tarapur (Silchar)

1936 13th February Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh appointed as an Ordinary Member of the Manipur State Darbar

1937 1 March 3rd Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha held at Mandalay (Burma)

1938 November His Highness the Maharaja received a petition signed by 356 members of the Manipur public asking for the setting up of a Legislative Council

1938 30 December 4 Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha held at the Chinga Hill *Maidan* Imphal the word Hindu was dropped from the name of the Mahasabha

1939 March The President Manipur State Darbar framed his proposals for the State reforms and measures for checking the unrest

1939 November The Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha weighed in with a demand to the Maharaja of Manipur for the setting up of a *Unicameral Legislature*

1939 12th December Demonstration by several hundred women before the State Office asking the President of the State Darbar (Mr T A Sharpe) to forbid the export of rice from Manipur

1939 19th December The Manipur Praja Sanmiloni was formed under the Presidentship of Hijam Irabot Singh

1940, April His Highness the Maharaja presented his suggestions for the proposed State reforms

1940, 25th August 5th Session of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha held at Thoubal

1940 November Orders were received from His Excellency the Agent to the Crown Representative laying down the reforms to be introduced in Manipur

1941 Census population of the Manipur State (5,12,127)

1941 6th November His Highness Maharaja Chura Chand Singh died in Nabadwip

1941, 7th December Japan entered the War

GLOSSARY

(Of the non-English terms used in the book.)

Adalat [Arabic 'a court of justice'] Under the Muhammadan government there were three such courts viz., 1. Nizamat Adalat [Chief Criminal Court] 2. Diwani Adalat [Civil Court] and 3. Faujdari Adalat [Police Court]

Ad nauseam To an excessive or disgusting degree (Latin: to sickness.)

Ad valorem The fees for registration of deeds were known as *ad valorem* taxes in proportion to the estimated value of the goods concerned (Latin: according to the value)

Ahimsa Respect for all living things and avoidance of violence towards others both in thought and deed (Sanskrit *Himsa*: injury)

Akhanda (Manipur) Undivided or whole (Manipur)

Alai House, abode, dwelling place

Amin To check illicit cultivation and to give the boundaries to all the *pattas* an *Amin* establishment was appointed in 1894 95, and commenced operations in the *Laipham Panah* first. It is an Arabic [Amin] meaning 'a trustworthy person', and then an Inspector, &c. In India it has several uses as applied to native officials employed under the Civil Courts. An Amin may be employed by a Court to investigate accounts connected with a suit, to prosecute local enquiries of any kind bearing on a suit, to sell or to deliver over possession of immovable property etc. The name is also applied to native assistants in the duties of land survey. An Amin supervised the cultivation of arable land

Amin Chakthak On 7th August 1907, the Manipur State Darbar resolved that Members of the Darbar would get *pothang* for 12 loads (free of labour charge) and for free fooding i.e., *Amin Chakthak*, they would get straw, grass and fuel free of cost but that they were to pay for the cost of other things both for their own use and their personal servants

Amin Lakpa The assessment of land tax was checked by the *Amins*, in charge of an official known as *Amin Lakpa*. They were employed in measuring lands under cultivation

Amukhtars Professional attorney [An *Amukhtar* was ordinarily forbidden to appear in the State Courts.]

Angamba An honorary title conferred to a Magistrate of a Cherap Court. He used to receive rent-free 50 *paris* of land (circa 1893)

Angang Chakthak If a wife was in a state of pregnancy at the time of *Khainaba* she was entitled to 12 pots of paddy and Rs 4 only as *Angang Chakthak* This customary maintenance (*Angang Chakthak*) was allowed to a wife separated even when she was living in her parental house

Angom Ningthou The ex officio President of the Cheirap Court Cf Atombahouba Singh

Aswin Kartik Manipuri month Mera English month September October [Cf Kula Chandra's letter to the Chief Commissioner of Assam ***"I ascended the throne of my father and grandfather on the 8th Aswin last, i e 23rd September 1890"***

Atta Meal obtained by grinding cereals esp wheat

Aya Purel Awa Purel The office of *Awa Purel* or Foreign Minister seems to have been first created by Maharaja Chandra Kirti Singh and to be associated with the military rather than the civil organisation The officer was responsible for the management of relations with Burma

Ayokpa Slaves when seized were made to work for the Raja under the name of *Ayokpa* (maintained) they looked after the royal gardens

Babu [Bengali and Hindi] Properly a term of respect attached to a name like Master or Mr and formerly in some parts of Hindustan applied to certain persons of distinction From the extensive employment of the Bengali class to which the term was applied as a title in the capacity of clerks in English offices the word has come often to signify *a native clerk who writes English*

Badmashes A miscreant or a rascal [From Persian *bad* evil and Arabic *ma ash* means of livelihood

Bandh closure stopped or discontinued

Bangors Bengali or Assamese buffaloes

Bara Sahib (*Bara* big) a polite form of address (in India) often placed after a person's name or title (Cf *Pucca Sahib*)

Begar Forced labour without payment [Hind *begari* from Persian *begar* forced labour] A person pressed to carry a load or do other work really or professedly for public service In some Provinces *begar* is the forced labour and *begari* the pressed man

Benasthakari Religious Counsellor

Bichar Consideration opinion or thought

Bigha Five eighths of an acre The most common Hindu measure of land area and varying much in different parts of India The *bigha* formerly adopted in the Revenue Survey of the N W Provinces was one of 3025 sq yards or 5 8 of an acre This was apparently founded on Akbar's *beegah* which contained 3600 sq *Ilahi gaz* of about 33 inches each

Bona fides Genuine sincere

Brahma Sabha A Council of Manipuri Brahmins

Bungalow One storeyed house Hindustani *bangla* belonging to Bengal The most usual class of house occupied by Europeans in the interior of India being one story and covered by a pyramidal roof which in the normal bungalow is of thatch but may be of tiles without impairing its title to be called a bungalow Most of

the houses of officers in Indian Cantonments are of this character Bungalow is sometimes employed in contradistinction to the *Pucca House* by which latter term is implied a masonry house with a terraced roof

Chabok Wang gon For the Maharaja's wives a house was built for the conception called *Wang gon Shang* For other people the conception house was called *Chabok Shang* The reason for having a birth house was that after a birth no feast or religious ceremony could take place in the house until it had been purified On the occasion on the birth of child to His Highness the Raja by any Rani a subscription of one pice (3 pies) per house was collected from all the Meiteis except *Phamnaibas* husbands and sons of *Leimasijas* *Ningthou Sagei*s *Sijabams* *Duhons* Brahmins Rajkumars and *Lois*

Chaitra Cheitra (Cf Cheiraoba) The Hindu Manipuris celebrate a festival on the last day of the year This day comes off on the last day of *Cheitra* month of the Bengali calendar The festival is known in Manipuri as *Cheiraoba*

Chandan Senkhai The Manipur State Darbar fixed the subscription rate of the *Chandan Senkhai* and every Meitei had to contribute it The *Chandan Senkhai* was not levied without the order of the Darbar

Chaprasi A Peon Orderly [Hind *chaprasi* the bearer of a *chapras* i e a badge plate inscribed with the name of the office to which the bearer is attached] The *chaprasi* is an office messenger or henchman bearing such a badge on a cloth or leather belt The term belongs to the Bengal Presidency In Madras *Peon* is the usual term in Bombay *Pattawala*

Chaukidar (A rural policeman circa 1891) A *Chaukidar* was a rural policeman and was appointed to every 100 houses His duties were to keep himself cognizant of what went on in his beat without in any way prying into the domestic or private life of the people He reported the occurrence of crime unnatural death epidemic of sickness state of the crops and other matters of importance to the member of the Panchayet under whose immediate orders he was placed He lived in his beat and received from the house owners an annual payment of 12 pots of *dhan* and from the State half *pari* of rice land free of rent The *Chaukidar* was elected by the people subject to confirmation of the Political Agent Derivative in Persian from *Choki* [a watchman] In some parts of India he is generally of a thieving tribe and his employment may be regarded as a sort of blackmail to ensure one's property

Chaukidarna Pao Chenba To carry massage by the *Chaukidar*

Cheiraoba Cheithaba The Manipuri *Cheiraoba* literally means announcing or heralding with a stick The term is derived from the incident believed to have taken place in the past that a herald of the King used to proclaim the passing of the old and the coming of the new year to every nook and corner of the kingdom by ringing a bell tied to the top of a stick of pole that he carried The festival is closely connected with the choice of a *Cheithaba* or name giver for the coming year and takes place at the end of the Manipuri month called *Lamda* which corresponds with the middle of April The Deity in whose particular honour the festival is held is Sanamahi the Lord of the Universe Every year the *Cheithaba* selected on the last day of Chaitra was granted a *pari* of rent free land for his lifetime

Coolie Porter

Corvee A day s work of unpaid labour due to a Lord from a vassal labour exacted in lieu of paying taxes Every male in Manipur had to work free for a certain period of the year for the Raja

Cutcherry An office of administration a court house [Hind *kachahri*] The word is not usually [in Bengal in 1886] applied to a merchant s counting house which is called *Dufter* but it is applied to the office of a Zemindar the business in which is more like that of a Magistrate s or Collector s Office

Dag Chitha To which the lands in any given *patta* could be referred and from which it could be ascertained where lands were situated Introduced in Manipur in 1897 1898 (The registers in which the results of the measurements are recorded are two in number for cultivators holding land directly under the State a field register or *Dag Chitha* and a *Jamabandi* or revenue roll In the case of lands held by tenants under the landowners the measurements are recorded in the *Dag Chitha* and in the tenants record of rights The *Dag Chitha* shows the number borne by each field the *rayat* s name the name of the tenant the area class of land the area under double cropping and the crops grown besides other things The *Jamabandi* is a record of the fields constituting each *rayat* holdings their area class of land and assessment

Dak [Hind *dak* post] Transport by relays of men and horses and thence the mail or letter post as well as any arrangement for traveling or for transmitting article by such relays

Dak Bungalow Rest House Cf *Serai* A rest house for the accomodation of travellers formerly maintained by the paternal care of the Government of India The material of the accomodation was humble enough but comprised the things essential for the weary travellers shelter a bed and table a bathroom and a servant furnishing food at a very moderate cost

Darji [Persian] A tailor

Daroga Wilson defines the word thus The chief native officer in various departments under the native government a superintendent a manager but in later times he is especially the head of a police customs or excise station Under the British Police system from 1 93 to1862 (3 the Daroga was a local chief of police or Head Constable

Darwan [Persian] A door keeper A domestic servant so called is usual in the larger houses of Calcutta

De Jure Rightful by right Maharaja Chura Chand was venerated as the *de jure* sole religious head of all the Hindu Manipuris (C I N H M M Reso 30 May 1934)

Deshi Kasrat Physical drills or exercise

Dharma Bebasthapok Sabha Religious Council

Dhobi A washer man (in the Indian Subcontinent)

Dhurries Newar Cotton carpets a thick and wide cotton tape used in weaving a bedstead

Diwali A festival of light celebrated by men women and children On this day the Goddess of wealth is worshipped in almost every Manipuri household

Dobashi [Hind] A man of two languages Tamil *tupashi* an interpreter

Dola Raja Chief of a district

Dolai Pabas They were in the first place palanquin bearers and were further employed as judicial messengers and *lictors* During the British administration the *Dolai Pabas* acted as Peons of the Judicial Department The *Dolai Pabas* of the Cherap and Sadar Panchayet Courts were paid Rs 2 a month and a free grant of land They were not supposed to take *Pothang*

Dolairoi Hanjaba Superintendent of the State Palanquins The officer had a seat in the Cherap Court but it was not necessary that he should be a member of the royal family

Dookan [Arabiac *dukkan* a shop Hind *dukan dukandar* a shop keeper]

Dowager Rani A widow with a title or property derived from her late husband Re Maharani Maisnam Kumudini (mother to Chandra Kirti Maharaja)

Duhon He was a Raja's servant who brought water and made *pan* for the King

Ekra (RI thatching grass)

Feringi [Persian] The term when employed by natives in India is either applied specifically to the Indian born Portuguese or when used more generally for European implies something of hostility or disparagement

Fourel [paddy] A kind of paddy ripening in about 6 (six) months

Fung ganai Shangdakpa *Fung ganais* were the slaves who lived in their masters *ingkhol* with their own hearth (*fung ga* hearth *minai* slave) The royal *Fung ganai* included *Hidak Phanba Potsangba Tangkhul Ayokpa Yaithibi Haomacha Sang gai Shangba Duhon Pujari* and *Khudong Khanba*

Gaddi Cushion throne The seat of royalty a simple sheet or mat or carpet on the floor with a large cushion or pillow at the head against which the great man reclines' [Wilson] ***"To be placed on the Gaddi"*** is to succeed to the kingdom

Gauche Lacking ease grace socially awkward and tactless [French left handed]

Gauradharma Pracharini Sabha A branch of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha

Golmal A confusion mess

Gonok (Manipuri) Acharya Brahmins

Guard (Lop) A Military Council Manipur

Hajai Enjoyment luxurious living

Heikak (Hindi *Singhara*) A plant growing wild in most of the lake areas of Manipur (Trapaceae) In Manipur fresh ones are commonly served as vegetable

Hiyang and Higa Shangs A big boat for use in the royal boat race which usually took place on the moat which surrounded the Raja's enclosure Pavilions were erected on both sides of the moat the one for the Raja being of considerable size and height The women occupied pavilions (*Higa Shangs*) on the opposite side of the moat The *Hiyangbak* was symbolically decorated When the *Hiyang* took place a subscription of one pie was collected from every Meitei house in Imphal for the constructions of *Higa Shangs* for the Raja and the Rani The *Phamnaibas* built their own pavilions

Holi (Yaoshang)- Birthday of Lord Chaitanya Whatever may be the origin of the Holi festival it is in essence a spring festival as it celebrates the advent of the Spring Season As the festival draws near a massive and brisk purchase of new clothes

takes place especially for women and children Every Manipuri has to be prepared for this major item of expenditure be he poor or otherwise [Re Snatching of the foreign clothes by Leipaklei and Sabi]

Howdah [Hind modified from Arabic *Hauday*] A great chair or framed seat carried by an elephant The original Arabic word *hauday* is applied to litters carried by camels

Hu ur [Arabic] The presence used by natives as a respectful way of talking of or to exalted personages

Ingkhol Land occupied by houses and gardens

Jamabandi The *Jamabandi* is a record of the fields constituting each *raiyat's* holdings their area class of land and assessment

Jat laba Degradation from the caste

Jhumins (cultivation) The migratory form of cultivation in the hilly areas of Manipur The *jhum* system of cultivation is practiced by a number of tribal races in Manipur [See detail in Major W McCulloch *Account of the Valley of Munnipore*]

Jubra The position held by the eldest son of the Maharaja or heir apparent of the Raja

Kang Thouri Kang Chingba Re *Rath Jatra* of the Hindus The festival came to Manipur with the introduction of Vaishnavism It was believed to have been celebrated for the first time in Manipur during the reign of Maharaja Gambhir Singh (1825 1834) The car which is locally known as *Kang* is a four wheeled chariot constructed by the local carpenters out of country wood The car is drawn and pushed by the devotees with the help of *Thouri* (rope) Instead of collecting *Kangthouri* a subscription of half an anna per house was collected from all the Meiteis except *Phamnaibas* sons and grand sons of certain high *Phamnaibas* husbands and sons of *Leima Siyas Ningthou Sageis Sijabams Duhons Brahmins Rajkumars* and *Lois* Nagas and the Muhammadans were not liable to pay this subscription And all the Meiteis were made liable to attend for *Kangchingba*

Kanungos A field staff of the Land Revenue Department They looked after the duties of the settlement of waste lands assessment of concealed cultivation and exclusion of relinquished land They were also used in hunting up defaulters and sending them to Imphal to pay their revenues [Portuguese Law Utterer] In Upper India and formerly in Bengal the registrar of a Tahsil or other revenue subdivision who receives the reports of the *Patwaris* or village registrars

Kawjeng (*Mauwa*) locusts grasshopper

Kayas Merchant trader or shopkeeper Cf Marwari *Baniyas*

Kei Rice slaves who watched the royal granaries at Kiyamgei Achanbigei Changang gei Mongsang gei Koireng gei Thinung gei Wakching gei and Keibi etc These were the granary villages

Keiroi Servant of the king who was employed in the granary

Kerai (an iron cup) In the Manipur hills there were eleven salt wells worked by the Nagas who paid a duty of Re 1 a *Kerai* which was supplied by the State The revenue to the Raja from these wells was from Rs 200 to Rs 500 per mensem

Khaddar Indian homespun clothes (Hindi)

Khas Land The land that is not settled with individuals and at the disposal of the Government is known as *Khas* land

Khata An account book or a ledger

Khedda (operation) Wild elephant hunting. Any Manipuri male had to go to the jungle to catch wild elephant when ordered by the Raja [Hind *kheda* to chase from Sanskrit *akheta* hunting] The term was used in Bengal for the enclosure constructed to entrap elephants. The system of hunting elephants by making trenches round a space and enticing the wild animals by means of tame decoys is described by Arrian *Indika* 13

Khewa Ferry trip ferry toll

Khorpos Lands given free to the favourites and relatives of the Raja and to the official and titleholders. There were about 1 050 acres of *Khorpos* (maintenance) lands set apart for the close relations of His Highness the Maharaja. Members of the Panchayets in lieu of salaries held another 85 acres of land. These lands were known as *Jolob Lou*. Both *Khorpos* and *Jolol Lou* lands were assessed to half the amount of revenue payable for other lands [Cf *Siphai Lou Mana Lou Pangngan Lou Pham Lou* and *Lunarou* etc]

Khutnaibas Artificers (goldsmiths blacksmiths carpenters etc)

Kotwal Head of the Police staff Re Tekendra Singh alias *Kotwal* Koireng (Senapati) He tried all civil and military cases [Persian *kotwal* a police officer superintendent of police native town magistrate. Because the towns were enclosed by fortified walls and gates their officers came to be known as the guardians of forts *kotpal* or *kotwal*. Kotwals were not military officers but they worked in collaboration with the military Commandant. During Akbar's reign the Kotwals were ordered to compile a census of all towns and large villages giving details of the inhabitants professions and activities. Information concerning the movements of both residents and visitors was given to the Kotwal. The Kotwals controlled the bazars merchants artisan guilds brokers prices and weights and measures. They were required to ensure that no unauthorized imports were levied in towns and were also responsible for supervising mints and the gold and silver content of the coins. Their duties included eradicating unemployment and investigating the sources of income of those who spent money extravagantly. Prohibitions were also enforced through the Kotwals. They were responsible for recovering stolen property and had to make recompense themselves if they failed to catch the thieves. A Kotwal had to expel religious imposters and charlatans and see that no oxen were slaughtered. Many of these provisions seem to echo the practices of the ancient Hindu kingdoms as reflected in such texts as the *Arthasastra* attributed to Kautilya. The use of the word *Kotwal* as was practised in Manipur was suggested by Pandit Achouba in 1933 as An officer called a Kotwal is in charge of all the *Inkhol* land within the boundaries of the Imphal city. He keeps a register showing the names of the owners and who the people are on each side of him. All boundary disputes are referred to him and he settles them usually with the help of a Panchayat drawn from among the neighbours

Kshetrani A woman of the Kshetriya caste a brave woman

Kumjan Sen On 31st March 1940 the Loitang Branch Committee of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha had resolved to stop payment of the illegal fees called *Kumjan Sen* and to worship Gods and Goddesses with fruits and flowers

Kumsa An illegal fine levied from the cultivators/*raiyats* by the *Amins* of the Land Revenue Department alleging that the *Amins* annually surveyed and did land measurement which they never actually did

Kwak Jatra It was an annual ceremony to ascertain whether the year would be prosperous or the reverse The other name for the *Kwak Jatra* was known as *Kwak Tanba* The former duties incumbent on the *Keirois* on the occasion of the *Kwak Jatra* were carried out in future (1914) at the State expense [See Note No 26 at the end of Chapter Four]

Lai Deity

Lai Haraoba [Rejoicing of the Gods] The *Lai Haraoba* festival of Manipur is observed in honour of the gods and goddesses locally known as the *Umang Lais* meaning deity of the woods and held in the wide open space in front of the *Umang Lai* (*Umang*—forest *Lai* deity) Many of these deities are amorphous and their abodes are represented by a huge pipal or big tree or by a thicket of trees or by a small hut Re Ng Kulachandra Singh *Meitei Lai Haraoba* (1963) Appendix When a *Lai Haraoba* was performed the *Sagei* or *Khul* on behalf of whose *Lai* it took place had to remunerate the *Maiba Shang* the *Maibi Shang* and the *Pena Khongba Shang* The rate was Rs 6 for each of the above colleges if the ceremony lasted for several days otherwise only Rs 4 If in any year any *Khul* or *Sagei* were unable to perform the full ceremony they merely made presents to its *Lai* and paid to each of the abovementioned *Shangs* only Rs 2 to Rs 4 according to circumstances

Lairou Each *Lai* had a *pari* or *Lairou* (sacred land revenue free) It was a grant of land for the maintenance of some particular temples

Lakpa Name of a post For political reasons Manipuris of influence and standing were at first appointed to the *Lakpa* s post because the income of a *Lakpa* was in any case very LARGE To avoid accumulating arrears and much consequent troubles for the purpose of collecting land revenue the Manipur valley was divided into four *Panahs* or divisions and a *Lakpa* or *Tahsildar* was appointed for each *Panah* in 1894 1895 The four *Panah Lakpas* were *Laipham Lakpa Khabam Lakpa Ahallup Lakpa* and *Naharup Lakpa* The four *Leikai Lakpas* were *Khwairakpa Yaiskul Lakpa Khurai Lakpa* and *Wangkhei Lakpa* The *Panah Lakpas* collected the *Lalup House Tax* Each *Lakpa* kept up an office establishment of writers and peons who received their salaries direct from the State Office but the cost was deducted from the commissions of 10 per cent on collections which was allowed to *Lakpas* as remuneration

Lalup It was considered the duty of every male between the ages of 17 and 60 to place his services at the disposal of the State without remuneration for a certain number of days in each year The number of days thus placed nominally at the disposal of the State was ten days in every forty The system of *Lalup* or forced labour was acknowledged by the authorities themselves to be radically bad On 29[t] April 1892 Major Maxwell made an announcement that the *Lalup* system was abolished from that date and to provide for the necessary expenditure on public works as a substitute for the *Lalup* he assessed the valley with a House Tax of Rs 2 per annum a house throughout the valley It was called the *Lalup House Tax*

Lam Subedar The hills of Manipur were divided into 5 *Lams* with a Manipuri in charge of each *Lam* called a *Lam Subedar* (Circa 1902-1903)

Lambus The hill tracts of Manipur were divided into five charges each under a *Sardar* with seven paid *Lambus* or Peons under each *Sardar* a reform carried out in 1893 94 The *Lambus* were previously unpaid and numbered some hundreds who lived on what they could extort from the Nagas by professing to exempt them from coolie work a boon for which high prices were paid They were used for the purpose of communication with the hill villages and checking taxable houses They carried out the duties of Police in addition to being the ordinary representatives and messengers of the Government [C f *Dobashis* of the Naga Hills]

Lat Sahib A popular corruption of ***Lord Sahib*** This is the usual form from native lips at least in the Bengal Presidency of the title by which the Governor General has long been known in the vernaculars

Lathis Stick cudgel or the Police baton [Prakrit *latthi* a stick] It is often made of the male bamboo and sometimes bound at short intervals with iron rings forming a formidable weapon

Lathiyal [Hind] Cumbrously *lathiwala* a clubman A hired ruffian

Lawai Areas Remote areas of the villages

Leikais A collection of families neighbours in a locality

Leima Sija Raj Kumar s daughter [C f *Sana Sija* and *Leima*]

Loi The *Lois* were of two types 1 A tributary tribe who were conquered by the Meiteis and 2 Men who were outcaste from the Meitei society and banished to a *Loi* village Men were sent to a *Loi* village for offences against religion against custom or against the Maharaja Adulteresses were sometimes sent to *Loi* villages and defeated rebels were also banished to *Loi* villages The Meiteis who transgressed were sent to *Loi* villages either forever or for a fixed period of time [Re Pandit Achouba 1933] The Chakpa speaking community *viz* Awang Sekmai Khurukhul Kautruk Phayeng Leimaram Leimaram Khunou and Andro was termed as *Loi* Their way of life and beliefs was similar with that of the hill people The means of their livelihood and occupation was distilling of liquor which they compulsorily used for ceremonial purposes such as death wedding and worshipping the Goddess of Nature Their social characteristics of inter marriage dining and *Sradh* ceremony etc were wholly different from those of the Manipuri Meitei [Re Resolution of a Meeting of Chakpa Speaking Community held on 8 June 1953 under the Presidentship of Angom Mangi at Phayeng School Correspondence address Kh Chaoba Ex M L A President Loy Association Sekmai Village P O Sekmai Manipur]

Lota A small round metal utensil The small spherical brass pot which Hindus use for drinking and sometimes for cooking This is the exclusive Anglo Indian application but natives also extend it to the spherical pipkins of earthenware

Lou Rice land There were four kinds of revenue free lands *viz* *Ningthem Lou (Sana Lou)* *Lairou* *Lugun Lou* and *Khorpos* (*Tolob Lou*) *Ningthem Lou* The lands personally enjoyed by the Raja *Lairou* A grant of land for the maintenance of some particular temples *Lugun Lou* Lands given to the Brahmins on the occasion of their taking sacred thread *Khorpos* Lands given free to the favourites and relatives of the Raja and to the official and the title holders See also 1 *Manalou* Rent free lands held during the lifetime of the person to whom they were granted 2 *Pang gan Lou* Land given as a reward for distinguished service

generally in war. The grants descended from father to son. 3. *Pham Lou*. Land held in connection with some office such as belonging to the Cherap Court. 4. *Lounarou*. Land held by purchase.

Lourungshang Land Revenue Office.

Lousal It was the rent paid in kind (paddy) by the tenant (*Langon Yanba*) to the land lord (*Loupu*). The usual *Lousal* is 12 *pots* (about 18 maunds) of paddy per *pari* of land. Occasionally if the land is good or situated near a good market the rate may rise as high as 20 *pots* (about 30 maunds).

Mahajan Merchant, tradesman or moneylender, Hindu bankers.

Maiba/Maibi The *Maibas* are the priests of the older religion. They were introduced before and were senior to the *Maibis*. The original functions of the *Maibas* and the *Maibis* were those of priesthood. They also acted as doctors and astronomers and gave advice on questions of marriage. [See *Lai Haraoba* above]

Maidan [Persian] An open space near a town, a parade ground, a *piazza* [in the Italian sense]

Mandab A Vaishnava temple, a favourite rendezvous of the village elders. It was regarded as a community hall for all social and religious functions and festivals that were locally performed and celebrated. There was a compulsory provision of mats by the Meitei villagers for the building of *Mandabs* on any occasion of emergency. This compulsory provision was finally abolished in 1914 and the necessary expenses borne by the State.

Mangba Sengba [Ref. Text 1938] Well to do Brahmins went round the villages informing people that the *Brahma Sabha* (Council of Brahmins) had declared them *Mangba* (outcast or excommunicate) and offering for a consideration to have them declared *Sengba* or (purified).

Marwari [Sanskrit *Maru* desert] This word Marwari, properly a man of the Marwar or Jodhpur country in Rajputana, is used in many parts of India as synonymous with *Banya* from the fact that many of the traders and money lenders have come originally from Marwar, most frequently Jain in religion.

Maund [Hind *man*] The authorized Anglo Indian form of the name of a weight which with varying values has been current over Western Asia from time immemorial. The Indian *maund* which is the standard of weight in British India is of 40 *sers*, each *ser* being divided into 16 *chhataks*, and this is the general scale of subdivision in the local weights of Bengal and Upper and Central India, though the value of the *ser* varies. The Portuguese converted *man* into *mao*, of which the English made *maune* and so our present form which occurs as early as 1611. The standard *ser* is 80 *tolas* or rupee weights.

Mauzadar This officer had Police powers equivalent to those of an Inspector of Police. He could send persons against whom cases were filed either to the Court of the Political Agent or to the Hill Court. (See Jiribam *Mauzadar*)

Mayangs The non Manipuris. Cachar was called *Mayang Leipak*. [See L. Ibungohal Singh *Meaning of Mayang*]

Mela Mila A fair.

Mem Sahib This singular example of a hybrid term is the usual respectful designation of a European married lady in the Bengal Presidency, the first portion representing madam. Madam Sahib is used at Bombay.

Mera Haojongba The hill people of Manipur did not perform *Lalup* and instead they paid a House Tax of Rs 2 per house The hill chiefs were to attend the capital (Imphal) once a year in the month of Mera with a nominal present of *Pan nao* (Bengali *Kachu Araceae*) and *Sing nao* (roots of ginger and *kachu*) During their stay in the Capital they performed a festival known as *Mera Haojongba* [See Manipur State Darbar Resolution No 7 of 3rd December 1913 as amended by Resolution No 1 of 28th January 1914 Those Naga villages which have in previous times been accustomed to appear for *Mera Haojongba* shall continue to do so They shall bring the usual trifling offerings in kind and shall be rewarded by the State

Minai The two slavery systems in Manipur were a) Any one became a slave either temporarily or permanently of his own free will and b) a man was made a slave forcibly and against his will Debt was perhaps the most general cause of voluntary slavery Maharaja Chandra Kirti Singh had slaves numbering about 1 700 or 1 500[11] The royal slaves (*Minais*) were given different names such as *Kei* who were the rice slaves and who watched the royal granaries at Kiyamgei Achanbigei Changang gei Mongsang gei Koireng gei Thinung gei Wakching gei Keibi etc the *Lois* who paid tributes in kind instead of *Lalup* Some of the *Loi* villages were Chandrakhong Ningel Sikhong and Waikhong (Salt) Kakching Khulen Kakching Wairi and Kakching Khunou (Iron) Wangoo Nungu Langjeng and Sugunu (Pine timber) Thanga Arong and Moirang ([illegible]) Phayeng Khurkhul Sagolmang and Waikok (Silk) etc In the investiture of the minor Raja Chura Chand on 29th April 1892 Major Maxwell announced the abolition of the *Lalup* system of forced labour for which was substituted a house tax in the valley of Rs 2 per annum and of slavery and the imposition of a land revenue assessment at Rs 5 a *pari* or 2½ acres and of a house tax of Rs 3 per year in the hills

Mitseng Sentry When the office staffs (*Amins Peons Kanungos*) of the Land Revenue Department came to the *Lawai* villages for collection of taxes they were authorised to engage the villagers by turns for guarding the money collected from the villagers At night also the villagers were put up on duty to watch the money This practice of 'forced labour' was known as *Yaiek Sentry* or *Mitseng Sentry*

Mleccha A non Indian a barbarian [See Basham p 560]

Moirang Khadrakpa It is the title of a Court official at Moirang

Moirang Ningthou Guardian and grandfather (Ramananda Singh) to Raja Chura Chand Singh Member of the Cherap Court T C Hodson in *The Meitheis* (1908) remarked "The list of offices at Moirang shows that the independence which Moirang has always claimed for its own affairs has reflected on the village organisation The chief is the *Moirang Ningthou* or King a title which at the present time is held by the grandfather of the Raja, although the right of the British Government to confer it was bitterly contested (P 72)

Moochy [Telegu *muchchc*, Hind *mochi*] One who works in leather either as shoemaker or saddler It is the name of a low caste

Morha [*Mora* Hind] A stool labouret, a footstool In common colloquial use

Muhorirs (Collection staff) of the Land Revenue Department [A writer in a native language] 'An elegant correct writer

Mukhtyar [Arabic *mukhtar* chosen but corruptly *mukhtyar*] An authorized agent an attorney *Mukhtyar nama* a power of attorney

Muttra [Mathura] A very ancient and holy Hindu city on the Jumna 30 miles above Agra The name is Mathura

Nambors The *Nambors* (like *Chowkidars*) of every *Mahalla* were chosen by the villagers and were responsible for the supply on payment of food carriage lodging labour *seba* and *sentry* for the State officials while on tour

Nautch [Hind *nach* from Sanskrit *nritya* through Prakrit *nachcha*] A kind of ballet dance performed by women also any kind of stage entertainment The word is in European use all over India

Nazar Gift present [Arabic *nazar*] Primarily a vow or votive offering but in ordinary use a ceremonial present properly an offering from an Inferior to a Superior the converse of *in am*

Ningthou Machas Rajkumars sons of Rajas

Nolens Volens Willy nilly perforce unwillingly

Nullah [Anglo Indian] A dry riverbed ravine Hindi *Nala*

Nupi Mamal If a husband forsook his wife he was not to pay her anything but if a wife forsook her husband she was liable to pay him Rs 50 (*Nupi Mamal*) irrespective of the fact whether she re married or not This *Nupi Mamal* was not payable when *Khainaba* (divorce) was effected with mutual consent

Pacha (Women s Court) The members (6 Dr R Brown) were appointed by the Raja from no particular class In this court all cases of family disputes in which women were concerned such as wife beating adultery etc were in the first instance heard and serious cases afterwards went before the Cherap Court The court was established for the judgement of matters only related with disputes between man and wife man and concubine It consisted of one *Pai Hanba* as the President and other 12 members (*vide* Ibungohal Singh L)

Pacha and Napet A yearly contribution of 4 *Longs* of *dhan* was collected from every house in the Manipur valley outside Imphal The *dhan* thus collected was divided between the *Napets* (barbers) and the *Pachas*

Pakhangbagi Shang Saba When *Pakhangba* s house needed repairing a subscription of one anna per house was collected from the *Ningthouja Salai*

Paltan [Hind] A corruption of Battalion possibly with some confusion of platoon It is the usual native word for a regiment of native infantry it is never applied to one of Europeans

Pan (Bengali *Kachu*) *Araceae*

Panah The Meiteis were divided into four groups each group was called a *Panah* The four *Panahs* were *Laipham Khabam Ahallup* and *Naharup Laipham* and *Khabam Panah* were called *Khunja Ahallup* and *Naharup Panah* were called *Naija* [See *Panah Lakpa*]

Panchayat [Hind *panch* five] A council [properly of 5 persons] assembled as a court of arbiters or jury or as a committee of the people of a village of the members of a caste etc to decide on questions interesting the body generally

Pari A *Pari* was nearly 2½ acres and was roughly 120 yards by 100 yards. A *Pari* of land on an average produced from 40 to 50 *pots* of *dhan*. The following was the system of land measurement in Manipur (circa 1891): 2 *Loushen* = 1 *Thong*, 2 *Thong* = 1 *Loukhai*, 2 *Loukhai* = 1 *Sangam*, 2 *Sangam* = 1 *Lourak*, 2 *Lourak* = 1 *Pari*. [RI to A.A. Howel, A.P.O. (Assistant Political Officer), 7 November 1891]. A *Pari* of land is equivalent to 7 *bighas*, 2 *kattas* and 10 *leshas* (about two and half acres). The rent (*Lousal*) of a *Pari* in kind was 12 *pots* of paddy.

Parwana Warrant, order. A grant or letter under royal seal; a letter of authority from an official to his subordinate; a license or pass.

Patta/Pattadar *Lam Mapu* (land owner). The *Pattas* issued under the authority of the Manipur State Darbar contained only a description of the land settled with a *patta* holder and the revenue payable for the use of the land. Whereas the *pattas* gave permanent settlement to the *pattadars*, the right of mining, fishing and other incorporeal rights were reserved for the State.

Pena The solitary musical instrument of Manipur. It was a sort of fiddle with one string of horsehair, the body of which was formed of the shell of a cocoanut. On the bow of the fiddle was a row of little bells which jingled in harmony with the air.

Pena Khongba Shang College of the minstrel. [Cf. *Lai Haraoba*, vide *Maiba Shang*, *Maibi Shang*, etc.]

Persona non grata An unacceptable or unwelcome person.

Phamen Derived from *phaba lenba* (to pass the time), i.e. the prohibition against taking paddy out of the granary has passed.

Phamban Kaba (longba) Ascends the throne. *Phamban* = throne, *Kaba* = climb, *longba* = sit on. The formal names of the Maharajas are assigned to them by the Pandits after the *Phamban longba* ceremony has been performed. On 28 January 1914 the Manipur State Darbar issued the following Resolution: "On the occasion of *Phamban longba* the *Kanurabas* and all *Yumnaks* should do the necessary work peculiar to their respective trades, the material being provided by the State. The ten *Pannas* [Sic] should also bear their share of the work. But no collection should be made in cash."

Phou Khai Land of paddy previously enjoyed by the *Chawkidars*. *Phou khai* was originally given to the *Chawkidars* for watching at night, a duty that they had never carried out.

Phunga Nai Slaves who lived in their masters' *Singkhol* with their own hearth. [*Phunga* = hearth, *Minai* = slaves.] The royal *Phunga Nai* included *Hidak Phanba, Potsangba, Lokpa, Yaithibi, Haomacha, Shanglen Shangba, Duhon Pujari and Khudong Khanba*.

Pot (of *Dhan*) Two *Sangbais* made one *Pot*. One *Pot* = 50 seers (circa 1891).

Pothang It was customary in Manipur that the valley roads and schools were kept up by village labour and that the Manipuri officials had their things carried free of cost from village to village when on tour.

Pothang Pats Free/small fisheries.

Prayaschit (money) Atonement. A minimum *Prayaschit* money was fixed by a joint deliberation of His Highness the Maharaja, the Darbar and the *Brahma Sabha*

in June 1938 The *Brahma Sabha* had prescribed the *Prayaschit* enjoined by the Hindu Shastras on performance of which the person declared *Mangba* became *Sengba* He had to obtain the Maharaja s permission to perform the penance

Pucca Pukka (Bridge) [Anglo Indian] Genuine of good quality

Puja Worship

Purna Swaraj The object of the Indian National Congress was defined as the attainment of *Swarajya* (self rule) by all legitimate and peaceful means *Swarajya* was taken to imply self rule within the Empire if possible

Raison d etre A reason that justifies a thing s existence

Rajbari Residence for the Raja and his family

Ratnas One of the chief members of the *Brahma Sabha*

Rayat [Arabic *raiyat*] It is by natives used for a subject in India but its specific Anglo Indian application is to a tenant of the soil an individual occupying land as a farmer or cultivator Cultivators who paid rents (usually in kind) to the officer holding the land or to the *patta* holder The rent was by custom fixed at 17 *pots* of 50 seers (or 15 maunds) of paddy per *pari* worth (in 1893 94) rate about Rs 14

Sadar [Arabic *sadr* chief] The use of the word seems to be almost confined to the Bengal Presidency Its principal applications are the following A *Sadar board* this is the Board of Revenue of which there is one at Calcutta B *Sadar Court* [Sadar Adalat] Till 1862 this was in Calcutta the Chief Court of Appeal from the mofussil the Judges being members of the Bengal Civil Service C *Sadar Amin* Chief Amin Under the system the highest rank of native Judge was Principal Sadar Amin the second rank Sadar Amin and the third Munsiff D *Sadar Station* The chief station of a district *vi* that where the Collector Judge and other chief civil officials reside and where their court are l **Sadar Bazar** A Sadar Bazar containing 19 shops has been built to the west of the Polo Ground and the large iron roofed building opposite the golden temple is utilized for the Commissariat stores [H St P Maxwell Political Agent in Manipur and Superintendent of the State *Administration Report of the Manipur Political Agency for 1891 92* P 9 A S P O [Report] No 7 50 17 6 92]

Sagol Hanjaba Superintendent of State ponies

Sahib The word is Arabic and originally it means a companion The title by which all over India European gentlemen are addressed and spoken of when no disrespect is intended by natives

Sairuk Innaba A man could not marry a girl belonging to the same *Gotra* (*Yek* and *Sairuk*) *Sairuk Innabas* were the descendants of the same mother but of different fathers

Saises [Syce/Sice] A groom esp in India Arabic *Sais* It is the word in universal use in the Bengal Presidency In the South horse keeper is more common and in Bombay a vernacular from of the latter *viz* *ghorawalla*

Sambandong Meitei married women allowed the hair to grow long and was combed back from the forehead and tied in a knot behind leaving a few inches dependent from the knot Women who could afford the luxury wore a chignon (*Sambandong*) which was incorporated with the knot of black hair

Samu Hanjaba Superintendent of State elephants

Sanad A Testimonial or a Certificate from high authority A diploma patent or deed of grant by a sovereign of an office privilege or right In Lord Canning s *Sanads of Adoption* the word grant replaces the more usual term Sanad in the proviso attached to the grant of the right of adoption [Cf Lee Warner (Sir) William K C S I *The Native States of India (1894) 2* edition 1910 p 38]

Sangbai (*Standard Lousal* and *Phoudai*) Standard contained 32 seers or 64 *L tongs* *Lousal* taken just after threshing in *Poinu* contained about 65 *L tongs* and *Phoudai* contained about 63 *L tong* ordinarily used by the sellers

Sarkar The Government

Selungba A *Selungba* kept a Register of all the cattle in the valley giving a description of each beast All disputes about cattle were referred to him

Senapati Commander of the forces

Sentek A fine levied from the villagers who failed to do *Seba* and *Yaruk Sentri* on account of sickness and who could not find themselves avoidable from a pre occupied private business

Serai Serai Caravan *serai* rest house (Turkish origin) A building used for the shelter and accommodation of traveller See *Purao The Sarais Act 1867 Act No XXII* Extended to Manipur in 1953

Shanglakpa A high official

Shanglen A Head Office

Shastras Sacred writings of the Hindus (Sanskrit *Sastra*)

Shikar [Anglo India] Hunting [Persian *shikar* sport] In the sense of shooting and hunting game *Shikari* a sportsman

Sipahis Sepoy A native Indian soldier under the British discipline Urdu & Persian *Sipahi* soldier

Sirdar [Persian *sardar* and less correctly *sirdar*] A leader a commander an officer a chief or lord the head of a set of palanquin bearers

Sudhi Purification

Sunda Kap panu Hotchallo It is blank firing! Rush forward

Swadeshi (Movement) Use of indigenous goods The Indians openly defied the Government and sought to exert pressure upon it by the adoption of such political weapons as the boycott of British goods The *Swadeshi Movement* gave rise to considerable enthusiasm for the industrial regeneration of India Re The export of Manipuri clothes which formed the most valuable cottage industries in the State during 1921 22

Takkavi (advance) Loan or advance of money given to cultivators See *The Northern India Takkhavi Act 1879 (X of 1879)* and also *Agriculturists Loans Act 1884* Loans to be made to owners and occupiers of arable land for the relief of distress the purchase of seed or any cattle or any other purpose not specified in the *Land Improvement Loans Act 1883 (XIX of 1883)* but connected with agricultural objects

Tera (Simul cotton tree) Silk cotton tree (*bombax Malabaricum*) Cf Manipur State Darbar Resolution No 5 of 4 May 1909 Resolved that an order be published

prohibiting the cutting of the cotton tree (*Tera*) by private persons as in accordance with old custom all such trees are the property of His Highness the Raja

Thanas (in Manipur territory) Traders bitterly complained of the exactions at the various *Thanas* in the Manipur territory They had to pass four *Thanas* before reaching Manipur and were stopped at each till the demand of the officer in charge was satisfied

Thang Paire They are holding swords!

Tola [Hind *tola* Sanskrit *tula*] An Indian weight chiefly of gold not of extreme antiquity The Hindu scale is 8 *rattis* 1 *masha* 12 *mashas* 1 *tola* Thus the *tola* was equal to 96 *rattis* [Cf The arrest of Tikendrajit Bir Singh by Subedar Khelendra and Tikendrajit s offer of gold of 6 *tolas* to the Subedar to release him]

Tolop Phou The village *Chawkidars* of all the 5 *Panahs* were given Rs 2 each as their monthly pay and 12 pots of *dhan* as their *Tolop Phou*

Tuckavee [Hind *takavi* from Arabic *kavi* reinforcement] Money advanced to a *Raiot* by his superior to enable him to carry on his cultivation and recoverable with his quota of revenue

Turban A man s headdress of cotton or silk wound round the head [Turkish *turban* from Persian *dulband*] A Turkish hat of white and fine linen wreathed into a rundle broad at the bottom to enclose the head and lessening for ornament towards the top Worn especially by Muslims and Sikhs

Uchikhang (damage done by the rats) If the *Lousal* in kind (paddy) was collected in *Kalen* (Summer) and subsequent months *Uchikhang* was deducted by the *Langon Yanba* (cultivator) the amount of which was fixed according to the agreement between the *Langon Yanba* and the *Loupu* (*Pattadar*) If the *Lousal* was realised after *Wakching* and before *Kalen* from the barn of the tenant the *Lousal* was paid in the standard *Sangbai* containing 64 *Utongs* and no *Uchikhang* was deducted [The reason of having three kinds of *Sangbais* is that during the harvest time (*Poinu*) the paddy is not sufficiently dry and therefore bigger than the standard size after *Wakching* being kept in the barn for more than one month the paddy is sufficiently dry and therefore comes to the standard size The sale of paddy by the *Loupu* and the stockist is ordinarily begun from *Inga* and by this time the paddy is more sufficiently dry and consideration of the *Uchikhang* also is made Cf Ibungohal Singh L *Introduction to Manipur* p 97]

Umang Lai (*Umang*—forest *Lai* Deity) The *Umang Lais* were worshipped in Manipur before the Hinduism was introduced They were worshipped by the *Maibas* and *Maibis* under the direction of the *Maiba Loishang* or *Pandit Loishang* the Head of which was the *Pandit Achouba* The *Lai Haraoba* festival of Manipur is observed in honour of the *Umang Lais* Although about 400 *Umang Lais* are worshipped in different parts of Manipur the most important 9 *Umang Lais* are *1) Laiyingthou Hanba 2) Muwa Ningthou 3) Mongba Hanba 4) Naokan 5) Chakkhaba 6) Koubaren 7) Khamlangba 8) Luwang Punshiba and 9) Marjing*

Utongs (of *Dhan*) A bamboo made container for measurement of paddy quantity One *Standard Sangbai* of 32 seers contains 64 *Utongs* one *Lousal Sangbai* contains 65 *Utongs* and one *Phoudai Sangbai* contains 63 *Utongs*

Utsav/Utsob Festival celebration

Uttra The ancestral Coronation Hall of the Manipur Rajas

Veranda [Sanskrit *baranda* Bengali *Baranda* Hindi *varanda* Persian *baramadah*] An open pillared gallery round a house

Vox populi Public opinion the general verdict

Wakheisel Every winner of any case in the Cherap and the Sadar Panchayet Courts whether Civil or Criminal was bound to pay a penalty of Re 1 called *Wakheisel* and it was divided among the staff of the Court In the *Administration Report of the Manipur Political Agency for 1889 90* E St C Grimwood (Political Agent of Manipur) recorded on 26 April 1890 At the conclusion of a case it is customary for the successful party to pay a small sum Re 1 or more which is divided between the officer deciding the case and the principal bystanders after which the case cannot be reopened (p 4)

Wangkheirakpa He was one of the principal members of the Cherap Court which administered the laws and customs of Manipur (T C Hodson *The Meitheis* pp 65 91)

Wayel Louba An honorary title conferred to each member of a Panchayet Court (circa 1895)

Yaiskul Lakpa Angom Ningthou was the President of the Cherap Court and the four *Lakpas* acted as Members 1] *Khurai rakpa* 2] *Wangkhei rakpa* 3] *Khwai rakpa* and 4] *Yaiskul Lakpa*

Yumnak (House hold name) A *Yumnak* of each of the seven *Salais* had its own *Mashin* The work of each *Yumnak* determined its name and the work so done covered all the aspects of life social economic political cultural and religious etc

APPENDICES

[1]

Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha
I Session
Palace Rasa Mandal
30th May 1934 17th Kalen
1146 Chandrabda

President His Highness Maharaja Sir Churachand Singh ***[Bahadur], K C S I, C B E, Bhakta Rajarsee, Srikundaseva Binoda, Dampi Ngamba, Huenlangsheifaba, Dharma Palak Nripachuramani.***

Vice President Sri Tomchouba Singh [*Ingom Ningthou*] President Cherap Court

President Reception Committee Sjt Irabot Singh

The following resolutions were passed

Resolved

1 That this conference expresses its hearty joy at the achievement of K C S I this new year by our Maharajah to the glorification of the whole Manipuri Community

2 That this conference places on record its deep sense of regret at the premature demise of His Highness only sister and prays to God so that her soul may rest in peace in heaven

3 That this conference record its profound sense of sorrow at the death of the late Regent Kulachandra Dhaja Singh and prays to God for his soul s peaceful rest in heaven

4 That this conference expresses its heartfelt regret at the tragic and premature death of late Rajbabu Singh Manager Manipuri and at the death of Khetrimayum Kunjabihari Singh and prays to God so that their souls may rest peacefully in heaven

5 That this conference requests all the Manipuris of the Surma Valley to remove that sectional ill feeling which it is learnt with great regret in cropping up in our body social between the Meiteis and the Bisnupriyas owing to the incisive sectionalism and which is a nonentity in Manipur the homeland of all the Manipuris and advises them to withdraw the internecinely segregating and invidious portions in their memorials sent up to the Assam Government

6 That as there is no authentic history of Manipur and as what others who have little knowledge about our religion and origin have written are unsatisfactory the Manipuri writers of Manipuri History be encouraged by awarding prizes to the best ones

[a] That with a view to this end a fund of not less than Rs 500 be subscribed from among the Manipuris and a **Historical Society** with His Highness as the President be started the responsibility of carrying out this scheme being placed on Sj Atombapu Sarma *Vidyaratna*

[b] That to begin with the prizes each amounting to Rs 100 be awarded to the best thesis writer either on the life of Garibnawaj or the origin of the Manipuris or the religion of the Manipuris

7 That the Manipuri language which is recognized by the Calcutta University be taken up as vernacular in their respective schools by the Manipuris domiciled outside Manipur

8 That the arts of sword fencing lance plying wrestling Kangjei [Manipuri Hockey and Polo] which are conducive scientifically so to say to the health and strength and which Manipur was once famous for be restored to a vigorous animation in order to check the physical deterioration and imbecility among the Manipuris which have partly resulted from the gradual evanescence of these useful arts

[I] That to give effect to this motion gymnasiums or clubs under qualified demonstrator be established at various local centers with the permission of the local authorities concerned

[II] That the mock fights and matches of these skilful arts be arranged every year on the Babhruvahan Jayanti day

9 That a Mission amenable to the Hindu Sastras be started to preach **'Gourdharma'**

10 That His Highness the Maharajah of Manipur be venerated as the *de jure* Socio religious head of all the Hindu Manipuris

11 That open social sanction be given to the intermarriage between the Manipuri Hindu community and the other Hindu communities of India if according to the injunctions of Sastras and customs there is nothing socially objectionable in such intermarriage which our ancestors too contracted

12 That the local Governments of Assam Bengal and Burma be moved so that all the Manipuris domiciled outside Manipur the officials and the non officials indiscriminately may attend the future sessions of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha should political matters be not touched and a copy of the resolutions of this Session along with a copy of English rendering of the same be sent to these Governments for their perusal

13 That the sacred obligation of compulsorily imparting primary education and education up to *Adas* standard in the case of the Brahmins to his ward be taken up by every Manipuri and co education be allowed in the primary schools

14 That efforts be made to establish High Schools at the suitable centers in order to increase of erudites

15 That a committee be formed to check the immoral traffic in women and to bring back the *Manipuri Bayees* to moral and decent mode of living

16 That the persons engaged in such immoral traffic in women be socially ostracized until he undergoes Sastric atonement in addition to the punishment inflicted by the authority

17 That His Highness the Maharajah be requested to prohibit henceforward the Manipuri Brahmins from marrying the ladies of the other Manipuri castes as such marriage has been a source of disturbance of our social equilibrium [illegible]

to such ladies when divorced and divorce on flimsy grounds in such marriages already existing be not allowed

18 That the old Manipuri scripts be popularized among Manipuris

19 That a Provident Society according to the *India Government's Act No 5 of 1912* be started and for this purpose a committee be formed

20 That in view of the rapid increase of smoking evil the Manipur State authority be requested for the incorporation of ***Juvenile Smoking Act*** now in force in Assam

21 That this conference places on record its deep sense of appreciation and heartfelt gratitude for the noble service voluntarily rendered by Sj Nongthombam Gourahari Singh Moirangkhom by arranging free board for the delegates from outside Manipur and this conference wishes him every success

22 That from this year the organization of Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha be initiated with an annual session henceforth and its Working Committee composed of seventeen members — six from Manipur one from Dacca two from Assam Valley two from Tripperah two from Burma and four from Cachar Quorum being formed six and co-opting and vacancy filling powers be given to the Working Committee

Moved from the chair and approved by all
The following gentlemen are elected on the Working Committee

Sl No	*Name*	*Address*
1	Lontonpbam Jombi Singh	Burma
2	Gokul Chandra Singh	Dacca
3	Knothoujam Gulap Singh	Tripperah
4	Hijam Ratan Singh	Assam Valley
5	Khetrimayum Bijoy Chandra Singh	Cachar
6	Norendra Singh	Cachar
7	Raman Singh *Sar Panch*	Cachar
8	Khelchandra Mukhopadhyai	Cachar
9	Krishnamohan Singh M A B L	Manipur
10	Lalit Madhab Chaterjee	Manipur
11	Irabot Singh	Manipur
12	Nongmeikapam Gopal Singh	Manipur
13	Mohendra Singh	Manipur
14	Maimom Madhumangal Singh	Manipur

Sd/
Chura Chand Singh [K C S I C B E]
MAHARAJA OF MANIPUR
President Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha

[III]

Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha
Second Session
Manipurabda 1147 Lairen
[30 January 1936]
Tarapur Silchar

President His Highness Maharajah Sir Churachand Singhjee ***Bahadur K C S I, C B E, Bhaktarajarsee, Srikundaseva Binoda, Dampi Ngamba, Huenlangseifaba, Dharma Palak Birchuramani***

Vice President Sreejut Angom Tomchouba Singh Angom Ningthou President Manipur Cherap Court

General Secretary Sreejut Irabot Singh Member Manipur State Sadar Panchayet Court

Assistant General Secretary Sreejut Merachaoba Singh Tarapur Silchar

Secretary Sreejut Navakanto Singh P Sc Imphal

Chairman Reception Committee Sreejut Khelendra Chandra Mukhopadhyai Tarapur Silchar

Secretary Reception Committee Sreejut Chandra Singh Timber Merchant Silchar

Proceedings of the Second Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha held at Tarapur Silchar on 30 January 1936 The following resolutions were passed

Resolved

1 That the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha expresses its heartfelt and deep sense of sorrow at the demise of His Majesty the King Emperor George V and pray to God that His soul may rest in heaven in peace That one copy of this resolution translated into English be sent to the Governor of Assam

2 That the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha expresses its deep sense of sorrow at the death of Rajah Dumbra Singh Bara Senapati brother and preceptor of H H the Maharajah of Manipur and prays to God for the peaceful rest of the departed soul in heaven

That the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha expresses its deep sense of sorrow at the death of Sjt Wangkhem Chaoren Singh *Sarpanch* late member of the Working Committee Sjt Thangjam Manikchand Singh Member Cherap Court Sjt Chatanya Sarma *Hidang Brahma Sabha* Sjt Pandit Bara Sarma Sylhet and generous hearted Sjt Pangoi Singh Kaptanpur and prays to God for the peaceful rest of their departed souls in heaven

4 That the Mahasabha prays to Sree Sree Govindajee for the salvation of the departed souls of the fathers mothers brothers sisters and sons who expired at the great epidemic of cholera which occurred recently like annihilation in our mother country after the *Ardhadoi Yuva*

5 That the Samittee named ***Manipuri Seva Sangha*** established by the students and gentlemen of Sreedham Navadwip be recognised as a branch of the Mahasabha

6 That for the convenience of the Manipuri pilgrims and inter district and inter provincial Manipuri traders representation be made to the Railway and Shipping authorities for favour of employing Manipuris in the station lying near the Manipuri settlements in different districts of India and Burma

7 That as a means of improving the Manipuri language and literature efforts be made for the spread of songs in Manipuri

8 That for the preservation of the individual Manipuri religion of the Manipuri emigrants in Burma the Government of Burma be moved for the inclusion of Sanskrit and Manipuri in the curriculum of the Educational Department and that relation be kept between the domiciled Manipuris in Burma and Manipuris of other places in matters of trade

9 Resolution No 17 of the First Session of the Mahasabha was reconsidered Resolved that if any Brahmin married a *Kshetriyani* after the Second sitting of the Mahasabha [January 1936] he be made an outcast from the Brahmin society

10 That His Highness the Maharajah of Manipur be prayed for approval that co dining may be allowed in the house of Manipuri (*onok*) [Acharya Brahmins] who are themselves already allowed to dine in a line with other Manipuri outside their houses

11 That a *Kshetriya* woman if she be divorced and outcast after having been unlawfully married by a Brahmin be given again the same social *Kshetriya* status

12 That for teaching Manipuri efforts be made for the establishment of Primary Schools in every Manipuri village of other Provinces

13 The ***Assam Bengal Manipuri Society*** be established for the educational economical and moral advancement of the Manipuri community for enlistment of all the Manipuris of Manipur and Burma That Sjt Dwijamani Sarma M A be entrusted with the responsibility of forming a sub committee to consider the bye laws of the Society

14 For confirmation of the position of the Mahasabha by giving out its aim and purpose to all various sub committees be formed in suitable localities and that Sjt Krishna Chandra Singh be entrusted with the responsibility of forming a sub committee in Sylhet

15 That the Working Committee for the coming year be constituted as follows

Sl No	***Name***	***Address***
1	Sjt Dwijamani Sarma M A D I of Schools	Imphal Manipur
2	Sjt Hijam Irabot Singh Member	Imphal Manipur
3	Sjt Atombapu Sarma Vidyaratna	Imphal Manipur
4	Sjt Lalit Madhop Chaterjee	Imphal Manipur
5	Sjt Banka Bihari Sarma Vyakaran Tirtha	Imphal Manipur
6	Sjt Maimom Madhumangol Singh	Nambol Manipur
7	Sjt Hijam Roton Singh, B A B T	Tarapur Silchar
8	Sjt Diwan Nirjit Singh	Ramnagar Cachar
9	Sjt Yengkhom Komol Singh	Ramnagar Cachar

Sl No	Name	Address
10	Sjt Bijoy Chandra Singh	Silchar Cachar
11	Sjt Dhaneshor Singh	Benakandi Cachar
12	Sjt Yumnam Krishna Chandra Singh	Bhanughat Sylhet
13	Sjt Konthoujam Gulap Singh	Satsangam Tippera
14	Sjt Nodia Chand Singh	Satsangam Tippera
15	Sjt Radhamohan Sarma Kavya Tirtha	Hailakandi
16	Sjt Hijam Ratan Singh	Digboi Assam
17	Sjt Merachaoba Singh	Tarapur Silchar
18	Sjt Yumnam Chandra Singh Timber Merchant	Tarapur Silchar
19	Sjt Nitainanda Sarma	Mandalay Burma
20	Sjt Lalbala Sarma	Mandalay Burma

Co opting and vacancy filling powers be given to the new Working Committee and that ***Sjt Irabot Singh, Member, Imphal be appointed General Secretary*** That thanks should be communicated to all the retiring members for their services

Moved from the chair and approved by all

Sd
Atomchouba Singh / Angom Ningthou/,
President, Cherap Court,
Vice President
Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha

Approved
Sd
Churachand Singh /K C S I, C B E /,
Maharajah of Manipur,
President
Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha

[III]

Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha
Third Session
Mandalay [Burma]
1 March 1937
1148 Manipurabda Lairen 18

Vice President Sjt Irabot Singh Member

President, Reception Committee Sjt Churamani Sharma

General Secretary Sjt Lalit Madhob Chaterjee

The following resolutions were passed

Resolved

1 That the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha places on record its deep sense of sorrow at the premature death of Konthoujam Gulap Singh *Satsangam* Tipperah State and other delegates and prays to God that their souls may enjoy peaceful bliss in heaven and shares the sorrow of the bereaved families Proposed from the chair and approved by all

2 That one M E School where Manipuri boys can learn Manipuri language be established in the town of Mandalay and Local authorities there be approached to help the institution

3 That with a view to preserving *Vaishnava* Religion of the Hindu Manipuris and keeping it intact the Educational Authority of Manipur State be approached to include books on *Nitvachar* and *Achar* among the text books in primary schools of Manipur and every Manipuri living outside be compulsorily made to study books on the above subjects

4 That as many Hindu Manipuri ladies in Burma have gone out of the pale of our society and as a means to protect this and by dropping the question of money in marriages daughters be given in marriage to the bridegrooms of our own community thinking it to be a matter of glory in case they are deserving

5 That a branch Samity of the ***Gouradharma Pracharni Sabha*** which is now as a sub branch of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha be established in Burma

6 That in accordance with the 6 resolution of the I Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha a *Manipuri Historical Research Society* be established in Burma

7 That those Manipuri brethren who are outcastes from our Manipuri society be taken back again into our society after proper expiation according to the injunctions of the ***Sashtras*** provided they voluntarily and frankly renew their faith in *Sanaton Gouradharma* after a full understanding of their ignorance and mistake

8 That a Society of the Hindu Manipuris by the name of ***Burmese Manipur Pundit Jotisoday*** be established in Burma as a sub branch of Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha and the local authority be approached to make it included in *Jotish Pundit Sashtra* of that authority

9 That for the sake of convenience for the Hindu Manipuris living in Burma the local Government be approached to allot seats the Hindu Manipuris in the posts of Municipal Commissioners and Honorary Magistrates of Mandalay town

10 According to religion no person can drink or eat anything before a dead person of his or her family is cremated The Hindu Manipuris of Burma cannot get in the pass required for cremation as a result of which there are disadvantages to the Manipuris living in Burma and in view of the Sashtras there arises some disorders as regards religion Resolved that to remove such disadvantages as regards religion the authorities be approached to issue such pass to have the cremation accomplished in time

11 That the authorities of various localities be approached to put a stop to employment of cows in tilling the ground as from such a task they fail to produce fine class of breed and get premature decay in strength

12 That a Society for music by the name of ***Goura Samprada*** be established in the town of Mandalay as sub branch of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha and the Society for music in Manipur be requested to help it in musical art

13 That the 8 resolution of the 2 Sitting of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha being reconsidered the Burma and the India Governments be approached to preserve intact the already existing commercial relations between Burma and Manipur

14 As there is no proper fund up to the 3rd Session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha every delegate be requested to subscribe any amount according to his or her ability at least not less than one rupee towards creating a fund and bringing a greater stability to the Mahasabha and the Manipuris gentlemen to be requested to subscribe to it

15 That the Mahasabha thanks all the Members of the Working Committee for their arduous work of devotion to it for one year That the Working Committee for this year be constituted as follows

Sl No	*Name*	*Address*
1	Sjt Churamani Sarma	Mandalay
2	Sjt Brajabala Sarma	Do
3	Sjt Jaduchandra Sarma	Do
4	Sjt Gokulbala Sarma	Do
5	Sjt Churachandra Sarma	Do
6	Sjt Gokul Sarma	Do
	Sjt Brajabala Sarma [Iagaya]	Do
8	Sjt Chandradeva Sarma	Do
9	Sjt Kulamani Sarma	Segaing
10	Sjt Luktiram Sarma	Do
11	Sjt Gokulchandra Sarma	Do
12	Sjt Sukracharyya Sarma	Amarapur
13	Sjt Gopal Singh	Do
14	Sjt Brajashyam Sarma	Mandalay
15	Sjt Nabachandra Sarma	Do
16	Sjt Labanyachand Sarma	Do
17	Sjt Mohanshyam Sarma	Do
18	Sjt Punyaban Sarma	Do
19	Sjt Mani Sarma	Do
20	Sjt Sardas Sarma	Do
21	Sjt Kalamani Sarma	Do
22	Sjt Banka Bihari Sarma Vyakaran Tirtha	Manipur
23	Sjt Pundit Lalit Madhob Chaterjee	Do
24	Sjt Pundit Kashiram Sarma	Do
25	Sjt Lalbala Sarma	Mandalay

That a quorum be made of 8 members of the Working Committee Co Opting and vacancy filling powers be given to the new Working Committee Sjt Lalita Madhob Chaterjee be appointed General Secretary

Sd
Irabot Singh Member
Vice President
Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha

[IV]

Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha
4 Session Held at Imphal
30[t] December 1938

President Sjt Hijam Irabot Singh *Sadar Panchayet Member*

General Secretary Sjt Lalit Madhob Sarma

President Reception Committee Sjt Banka Bihari Sarma *Vyakaran Tirtha*

Resolved

1 This Mahasabha expresses its deep sense of sorrow at the premature death of Yendrembam Angangjao Singh a delegate and prays to God that his soul may rest peacefully in heaven

2 [a] This Mahasabha strongly condemns the repressive measures such as beating incarceration firing etc adopted towards the *Prajas* who carried out agitations for the fulfillment of their demands in the States of Hyderabad Mysore Dhvankanol Atgar Rajkot Kolapur and the other Native States in Orissa and convey its sympathy to all the bereaved members of the families of those heroes who sacrificed their lives in the struggle for freedom and also prays to God for a peaceful rest of the souls of those heroes who thus sacrificed their lives [b] This Mahasabha expresses its joy at the reforms being introduced in the two States of Mayurbhanj and Jodhpur for responsible Government

3 This Mahasabha expresses its joy at the success and consolidation of the Congress Coalition Ministry in Assam and congratulates the Honorable Chief Minister Sjt Gopinath Bordoloi on his success

4 *This Mahasabha has deleted the word* ***"HINDU"*** *in the name of this organization Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha that it may become an all Manipuri Mahasabha*

5 *This Mahasabha expresses its deep sense of sorrow at the incarceration of Rani Gaidilu of our Manipur hills who is still languishing in the Shillong Jail in the full bloom of her youth while all the political prisoners in Assam and many of them in the other Provinces have already been released and the India Government and local authorities be approached for her immediate release*

6 That in order to remove the poverty of the Manipuri nation to revive our cottage industry that has been lying in a decaying state for a long period of time to improve our economic condition and to enable ourselves to control the market an all Manipuri ***Khadi Sangha*** be established by starting ***Khadi Pratisthans*** in the villages of Manipur and by propagating ***"Khadir"***

7 That not even one out of a hundred Manipuri people is literate It will take many years before they will all become literate under the present conditions Literacy Campaign be launched among the illiterate adults that most of them may become literate within at most half of the period of time that will be required for the purpose at the present rate of progress

8 This Mahasabha suffers a great handicap from lack of funds and finds it difficult to keep any concrete programme therefore it is resolved that in view of the urgent necessity to have a fund of this Mahasabha to enable itself to turn all its resolutions into practice efforts be made to increase the funds of this Mahasabha

9 That the Assam Government be moved to reserve seats in the Assam Council and Assembly for the Caste Hindu Manipuris in proportion to their population in Assam

10 That Manipur State comprises hills and valleys the hills being eleven twelfths and the valleys one twelfth of the whole area of the State If the hill areas are excluded the valleys are not greater than a Sub Division Moreover the hill men and we the Meiteis have never been separated and cannot be separated in language in culture and in commerce The separation of the hills from the State is a great loss to the hill men as well as to the Meiteis So this Mahasabha lodges its strong protest against the separation of the hills The India Government be approached for keeping the hills under the State administration

11 This Mahasabha also demands the fulfillment of the claim of the Manipur State subjects for the establishment of a **Legislative Council** for the attainment of the representative form of Government for which they have already submitted an application to His Highness the Maharajah of Manipur Efforts be made by this Mahasabha for attaining this claim

12 This Mahasabha conveys its hearty thanks to Sjt N Gourhari Singh of Sagolbanad Leikai for his voluntarily rendering free boarding to all the foreign delegates coming to join the first sitting of the open session of the Mahasabha held in 1934 at Imphal and also to those who came to join the 4[th] Session held on the 30[th] December 1938 at Imphal

13 That there are no sound and well established Sanskrit institutions worth the name for imparting education to the Manipuri Brahmins whose number is so large and who have to perform without commission of mistakes the functions of directing religious matters making recitals at worships and *Sradha* ceremony and the like There are in Manipur only three nominal Sanskrit institutions [a very small number] Sic Here again there is no systematic teaching of theology and philosophy subjects no Brahmin can afford to eschew except for a meager portion of grammar and literature There is moreover no institution for higher degree Sanskrit classes State authorities be approached for establishing good Sanskrit Institutions where the Manipuri Brahmins may be given good education in Sanskrit and also for taking steps whereby the aforesaid subjects may be taught by appointing competent Sanskrit teachers

14 That some Manipuri Vaishnabas suffered much from the oppression of the *Brahma Sabha* by being declared *Mangba* without giving any reasonable ground As it serves a strong bar to the Manipuri Vaishnabas progress and consequently to that of all the Manipuris so long as the personnel of the *Brahma Sabha* remains unchanged [so] it is not desirable to have the present member of the body as Guide in religious matters The authority or authorities concerned be approached to form a new body to decide religious affairs by electing members from among Meiteis and Brahmins after dissolving the present body It is

therefore resolved that the Working Committee be entrusted with doing necessary redressing works in case the authority declines to do so by keeping the present personnel of the body the same

15 That the State authorities be approached to permit the parties to appear in the Cheirap and the Panchayet Courts with their shoes and not to kneel down on the floor when they give their statements and to abolish the practice of taking **"WAKHEISEL"**

16 That most of the Manipuris migrated to Tippera and Assam and their lives in [clearing through poverty] the jungles for settlement His Highness the Maharajah and the State Darbar be approached for giving them means of their livelihood by giving them arable lands in the State

17 That Manipuri delegates be sent to the All India Kshetriya Conference

18 That in the Calcutta Museum an ugly statue meant to represent a Manipuri is placed among those representing the hill tribes Formerly a photo of a male and a female as representing the Hindu Manipuri was placed by the said statue So the said ugly statue was clearly distinguished to be the facsimile of a Manipuri of the hill tribe but not the Hindu Manipuri Now by the removal of the said photo all those visitors quite ignorant of the origin of the Hindu Manipuris are led [] regard the statue as the specimen representation of a Hindu Manipuri The Superintendent of the Calcutta Museum be approached to make necessary redress

19 That in the Calcutta Commercial Museum there are innumerable works of arts and crafts contributed by the various communities of India as marks of dexterity in this line But nothing of the sort from Manipur has yet been contributed This Mahasabha should make necessary arrangements to send some fine indigenous articles to the said Museum

20 This Mahasabha conveys its thanks to His Highness the Maharaja of Tippera for His Highness kindly exempting the Manipuris settling in Tippera State from paying their tuition fees in the Schools in the State

21 That the leaders of those *Kritania Manipuris* of the Tippera State be informed to do *Sudhi* in fifteen days for both the cases of birth and death instead of the former practice of *Sudhi* of birth in ten days and that of death in fifteen days

22 That the authorities be approached to introduce the Manipuri language recognised by the Calcutta University in the schools where only the Manipuri boys read and also in those where Manipuri boys also read

23 That the special concession granted to the Manipuri pilgrims proceeding upto the Nabadwip Ghat is due to this Mahasabha's efforts The Agent E I R be approached to grant similar concession to the Manipuri pilgrims proceeding to Brindaban

24 That the Political Agent and the Assam Government be approached to appoint competent Manipuris in higher grades in the Agency Court [Manipur] as no Manipuris have as yet been appointed in higher grades though there is no restriction from appointing them

25 This Mahasabha expresses its sorrow at the falling of Sjt Tikendra Dhaja Maharajkumar, the son of the late Maharajah Kulachandra Dhajah Singh, in a sea of sorrow with his family H H the Maharaja of Manipur, Political Agent in Manipur and the India Government be approached to fulfill his claim in order to remove his unbearable sufferings

26 This Mahasabha condoles the death of some of the Manipuri Muhammadans who have long settled in Burma, in the recent riot between the Burmese and the Muhammadans

27 *That the State Darbar be approached for passing Orders to make the State Courts and the other State Offices use terms of civility in their summons and notices*

28 That the President of the Mahasabha be empowered to select members on the Working Committee

29 That Sjt Chingakham Pishak Singh [M A] be appointed the General Secretary of this Mahasabha

30 That Sjt Laishram Jogeswar Singh be appointed the Assistant General Secretary of this Mahasabha

Sd /
Irabot Singh,
President, Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha

[V]

[See Chapter Nine Reference No 5, "Occurrence at the Telegraph Office on 12th December 1939"]

Application dated 13th December 1939 submitted to the Political Agent of Manipur and the names of the Signatories

Sl. No.	Name of Signatories	Address
1	Shri Moirangthem Chandra Singh	Khongman
2	Shri Angom Angou Singh	Leisangthem Leikai
3	Shri Yumnam Laxman Singh	Khurai Lamlong
4	Shri Adhikarimayum Hiranyagarva Sharma	Thangmeiban Lairen-Hanjaba Leikai
5	Shri Chongtham Ibobi Singh	Heirangoi Thong
6	Shri Langpoklakpam Abir Singh	Pishum Maning
7	Golap Mia Haji	Oinam Haoreibi
8	Shri Haisnam Birahari Singh	Tangbam Leikai
9	Shri Lukhoisana Rajkumar	Yaiskul
10	Shri Haimosana Rajkumar	Chingakham Leirak, Yaiskul
11	Shri Takhellambam Bokul Singh	Segalambi
12	Shri Keisam Kunjabihari Singh	Keisamthong

13	Shri Chingshubam Samungou Singh	Lairikyengbam Leikai
14	Shri Laimayum Sanamatum Sharma	Sagolban
15	Shri [ ] Toyaima Singh	Wangoi
16	Shri Brahmacharimayum Gouramani Sharma	Keisampat
17	Shri Takhelmayum Tombi Singh	Khurai Kongba
18	Sukur Mahamad Mia	Urup Keirao
19	Shri Laipubam Padmanav Sharma	Uripok Huidrom Leikai
20	Abdul Mia	Khergao
21	Shri Gurumayum Nehar-chandra Sharma	Brahmapur
22	Shri Chanam Tomba Singh	Chingamakha
23	Shri Seram Kshetri Singh	Yaiskul
24	Shri Ahanthem Samu	Hoidam Leirak
25	Shri Debandrajit Rajkumar	Okram Thingen
26	Shri Angom Mukul Mani	Brahmapur Bhagavati Leikai

[VI]

Application of 11[th] March 1940 submitted by the women mass of Manipur to the President, Manipur State Darbar Application drafted by Ningombam Tomba Singh of Singjamei Makha, Okram Leikai

BADINIGAN

Sl.No.	Name of Signatories	Address
1	Smt Sakhensana Rajkumari	Uripok Achom Leikai
2	Smt Nameirakpam Ningol Angangjaobi	Lamphel Mapal
3	Smt Kangjam Ningol Yumnam Ongbi Kula	Naoremthong Khulem Leikai
4	Smt Phurailatpam Ongbi Ibeton	Uripok Laikhurembi Maning
5	Smt Hanjabam Ningol Brahma-Charimayum Ongbi Ibeton	Wangkhei Ningthem Pukhri Mapan
6	Smt Wangkheimayum Ningol Sijagurumayum Ongbi Thambal Angoubi	Wangkhei, Wangkhei-Mayum Leikai
7	Smt Oinam Ongbi Laxmisana Rajkumari	Pishum Oinam Leikai
8	Smt Huidrom Ningol Laishram Ongbi Amubi	Pishum
9	Smt Oinam Ongbi Chamusana Rajkumari	Pishum Oinam Leikai
10	Smt Ngangom Ongbi Kaboklei	Haobam Marak
11	Smt Laishram Ongbi Malika	Segalambi Takhellambam Leikai

12.	Smt. Okram Ongbi Angangjaobi	Yumnam Leikai, Moirangkhom Makha
13.	Smt. Samurailatpam Ningol Numit-Lei	Yaiskul

BIBADINIGAN

Sl.No.	Name of Signatories	Address
1.	Smt Wahengbam Ongbi Tonkhombi	Wahengbam Leikai
2.	Smt. Oinam Ningol Ibemhal	Wangkhei Leikai
3.	Smt. Oinam Ningol Mukhi	Wangkhei
4	Smt.Laishram Ningol Khwairakpam Ongbi Sangaichaobi	Khwairamban

Other Signatories to the application of 11th March 1940.

1	Smt. Soubam Ongbi Ibemcha	Keisamthong
2.	Smt. Malika [No 11 Complainant]	Segalambi Takhellambam Leikai
3.	Smt Potsangbam Ongbi Kumari	Kwakeithel Takhellambam Leikai
4	Smt. Takhellambam Ongbi Ketuki	-Do-
5	Smt Pebam Ongbi Sabi	-Do-
6	Smt. Sorokhaibam Ongbi Tolapishak	Police Line
7	Smt Potsangbam Ningol Sakhi	-Do-
8	Smt. Laishram Ongbi Tharongoubi	-Do-
9	Smt. Potsangbam Ningol Pemcha	-Do-
10	Smt. Potsangbam Ningol Nungshisana	-Do-
11	Smt. Keisham Ongbi Ibemcha	Lamboi Khongnang-Makhong
12	Smt. Takhellambam Ningol Ibemchaobi	Kwakeithel Thiyam Leikai
13	Smt Lourembam Ningol Numit Lei	-Do-
14	Smt Heikrujam Ningol Tomal	-Do-
15	Smt Kshetrimayum Ongbi Chadombi	-Do-
16.	Smt. Laishram Ningol Thambal	-Do-
17	Smt. Potsangbam Ongbi Tharo	Takhellambam Leikai
18.	Smt. Tharaksana Rajkumari	Uripok Achom Leikai
19.	Smt. Kushumsana Rajkumari	-Do-
20	Smt. Khomdonsana Rajkumari	-Do-
21.	Smt. Bachaspatimayum Ongbi Sanahanbi	-Do-
22.	Angom Ningol Ibetonsija	-Do-
23.	Aribam Ningol Thambalsangbi	Lamboi Khongnang Makhong
24.	Smt. Lukamani	Keisamthong

25	Smt	Ningthoujam Ongbi Jubati	Nahabam
26	Smt	Leimapokpam Ongbi Chamu	Loklaobung
27	Smt	Keisam Ongbi Ibemcha	Police Line
28	Smt	Khoisnam Ningol Maipakpi	-Do-
29	Smt	Konthoujam Ningol Phajabi	-Do-
30	Smt	Leimapokpam Ongbi Tonsana	-Do-
31	Smt	Ayekpam Ongbi Sanatombi	Do-
32	Smt	Keisam Sanatombi	-Do-
33	Smt	Yumnam Ningol Kamini	-Do-
34	Smt	Athokpam Ongbi Tathoi	-Do-
35	Smt	Yumnam Ongbi Chandramukhi	-Do-

[VII]

Confidential

Imphal
13/12/39

My dear Mills,

Yesterday about 8 0 pm I was in camp in a Kuki village about 6 miles from Sugnu, which is 40 miles south of Imphal, when my A S I of Police arrived & told me that there was a strong agitation in Imphal against the export of rice & that things were looking ugly. I got back to Imphal about 3.00 Am

I have wired to you today a brief account. Tomorrow I will send you the reports of Sharpe & the Commandant on what happened. Meanwhile the agitation has not stopped although when I was talking to the crowd of women today at about 1 30 pm a telegram arrived from HH the Maharaja asking me to help in the stoppage of rice export. Orders were issued at once stopping it. I thought that would satisfy them, but there are

still crowds about & there may be further trouble I have arranged with Bulfield to have troops ready

The troops had to turn the women out of the Telegraph Office compound yesterday Six of them were more or less injured with stones & there are 5 or 6 women in Hospital Cummins tells me that they are not seriously injured I shall have a report from him soon

The women are now clamoring that all rice mills should be closed down I think that there are valid grounds for closing the export of rice, as the prices is more than double the normal for this time of year Moreover the Kayas have been buying all they can lay their hands on Although there has been a reasonable harvest stocks are not large after the heavy export of last season The anti-Kaya agitation is a strong point. The local Congress people are supposed to have been

behind yesterday's stone-throwing.

It is now reported that there will be a giant procession through the Bazar tonight I do not intend to stop this so long as it is orderly, as it may prove a safety-valve.

I will keep you informed of the course events take This agitation blazed up very suddenly

Yours Sincerely
C Gimson

PS
I have informed HH briefly If things get worse I shall ask him to come back from Nabadwip.
CG

[VIII]

Confidential P/6431/39 Imphal 14/12/39

My dear Mills,

Since I wrote earlier today things seem to have taken a turn for the worse. One Marwari who has a rice-mill at Mastripukhri (outside the British Reserve) was reported to have run his mill today in the morning. He certainly boiled some paddy but I do not know whether he used the electric power or not.

Crowds of women started to march there this evening. I got there before them by car & agreed that the (H & E) Board would not supply power to mills as the Marwaris had given chits that they would not use their mills. After a lot of talk, in which threats of smashing up houses & boilers were freely used, they did finally disperse about 8.30 pm when the main fuses had been removed from the buildings. They were all quite friendly to me personally; but the temper of the crowd seemed worse

Athom yesterday

The women have not been sitting in the Bazar for the last 2 days. I am not seriously worried about this, because there is quite a strong party which wants to sit & will do so soon, I am sure. Also the party which wishes to sell rice is beginning to appear For the moment, however, the embargo party are in power, & threats of more violence are being uttered against Marwaris I still hope that there will be no violence

H. H. the Maharaja has wired that he is leaving Nabadwip for Imphal tomorrow

I hope to have an official report of the occurrences of the 12th ready the day after tomorrow

Yours Sincerely
C. Gimson

[IX]

Imphal
15/12/39

Confidential

My dear Mills,
I am glad to be able to report
a great improvement in the situation
today There have been no incidents.
This afternoon a body of women presented
a petition asking that they should
receive all rice contracts & similar
things Some other women objected
I do not know whether the women will
return to the ~~Durbar~~ Bazar yet.
2. I was unduly optimistic when I
wrote that I should be able to send
you my report shortly It will be
a few days before it can come I have
not yet had any evidence from the
Manipuri side. Some may come
tomorrow I have still to examine
Cummins, who has been away
treating Lindsay Smith in Kohima

3 Of the 5 women taken to Hospital 3 would have been discharged today, but were detained for examination by Cummins tomorrow The other 2 will be discharged in a day or two

Yours Sincerely
G Gimson

P S
H H the Maharaja is due at Dimapur tomorrow & will come straight through to Manipur GG

[X]

To H.H. the Maharani of Manipur State

মহাশয় .—

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

(১) [illegible]

(২) [illegible]

(৩) [illegible]

(৪) [illegible]

(৫) [illegible]

(৬) [illegible]

(৭) [illegible]

(৮) [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[XI]

মহা মহিমমহীমশ্রী ১০৮ যুক্ত মণিপুরেশ্বর মহারাজাধিরাজ
কে: সি: এস: আই, সি: বি: ই: শ্রীচরণ কমলেষু

প্রজাপালকেষু
দরখাস্ত: = মণিপুর ষ্টেট প্রজাশাসনগী নুপী মহাম — প্রার্থিনী মন
মখাগী কারণ শ্রীযুত স্না মিয়েং তাবইনা-গা
হুদ্রি মুবি চাব তোঙ্গিনবগী প্রার্থনা।

শ্রীচরণে নিবেদন মিদম।—
ঐনাই তেম্বুগী প্রজা নুপী মইখেনা শ্রীযুত মহারাজ হুজুর তোগী শ্রীচরণদা হংসে চরিগদি শ্রীযুত হুজুর তোগী প্রজাগী মোল্লবা নুপী, মতাং, মম, ব্রাহ্মণতু যোকগানীরিবা হুজুর তোগী।

ঐনাই এখোই পুম্নমক্না ক্ষমিগী ফৌজী মরোং অসি তোইহনুদা থেয়াতিন্না চেৎসিন্নখা মরমদগী চাথা ও তঙ্খনা লাইরবা প্রজা এখোইগী চৎলা হেনগৎলা ফিরমগী কি ওইখনা ষ্টেট দরবারদা লাওকখই, হৈরা হুকুম মহুংনগী তেকগিবা মতুং হইনা হুকুম তৌ চৎচরখি। দরবার মেম্বরসিং না প্রজাদা সতীক ভাগা (সিংলামুং) হাইরহ তৌকিদরবি। মাংগী মতমদা মেম্বরসিং অসি লোইনা হেন্নবি মি, হুরি সাহেবতা হায়রোই, মহুংথ অহুমগুংদা ঐনাই এখোই মখা থেৎখিনা পুলিশদা কোর্ট মার্তগী মেম্বর হৌখনা তৌহুরবনি। ষ্টেট দরবারগী মাংদা হুরি সাহেবনা মেম্বর হনা পুন্নরা মতম দাদি মাহেব অইংসু লাকহে মাংনগী হুরি সাহেবনা হৌনিনা ~~[illegible]~~ অফিস তম্না পুথিবলা ~~[illegible]~~ পাব্লিকগী মিক্লাই মহাম লোইশি অসিং হাংলাখুনা লাকখি। মরমসিনা ঐনাই নুপীসিংমু অসিনা নুং লোইসনী তেংনিবনা শিমবা চাদনা থাম্মহনবিয়ু।

মতুংদা মসিগী দমক ঐনাই এখোইনা শ্রীযুত মহারাজ মা চরণন্দু খুমজতে চৎচবদা তমথাংদা মশুং না মদুর মলামদা তৌশিনবিয়ু। মাংদা থাবাগী বর্তমান আই: সি: এস: মশেংনা প্রজাগী থানিংদনা বরম হাইহবি। মাং যাদবগী প্রজাগী নুপীদা মতুং যোথুখনা থাওবিয়ু।

(২)

মণিপুরমতা লিংলা খুংগংশিংদা নুপী ওৎখোইগী হিংবা মুকপিতনা [illegible]
হাইজখি মহাকী চাউবা তিহ্নদুবে। মাহাকী মতমদগী চাউবা মহারাজগী
নুপী মায়রম কুমখিগী খোইরু দাখিবে। মাহাখুম হেক্ত মায়গী মতাংদা
লাকখা ১৯৩৯ মায় মতম মতমদা থেংনবা মাসা ১৯৩৯ মিদাংগী
মিথাই মইখৈবা মগী মায়ী ইচ ফল [illegible] খুলাই লাইরবা মতা মখাই
থোইবা লাইখাইরি।
অহনা নুপী ওৎখোইবা হিংবা খুংগংশিংদগী মতমদা [illegible]
মপুরী মনা মখায় চাউবা ঊতশিংগী হাংদে অমসুং "চাউবা নখোই খুমাইদি
চহানা শিনখে, মোইরাংদি হোন লাকপা লৈবা লাইথুম শিংলাগী নুপী মইখৈবা
হাই খলহনলে, শিংগী হোন লোইরনলে" হায়রকী থাংনা খুমখিবা মখৈ
থবা থাসীখম শিনবগী থাউরি।
তোঙবী মনাই ওৎখোইনা লিংলিগী মখাগী মায় খুমখাৎ অনীমুখবগী
থুংনি মুক্তিবগী তোইবিনা তোইদিনা থা খুমখা ঊনুম শিংলিনা থাবাও
থা খুমি মুখিবা তোইখিনা থাউজরি।
(১) খুমাম মণিপুরগী অতোপ্পা তৈথাজৈ লোইরে মখা খুমখাং
শিখিবা। মরমদি খুমামগী লোনগী অথৌবা থাদে।
(২) মণিপুরগী লোইরে তসৎগী হিরম (কোশ) মইথৈ অমতা থাদুনা
মরমদি - মণিপুরগী হেক্ত মখা ওইরিবা হুং লোইরে চদনা অমুখনী-
মখম নাখিবা ওইদবিগনী।
(৩) খুলাই লাইহনবা চাউবা খুমখিংগী থাখীনবা হুংলোইরে
লোইখিনা মিনখী মতমগী মচিক থবা শিংবা লোইখিবু খোইদবা
শিনবগী থাশিংগী থাখুমনা খুমাগনি। মখোই অশিংদি চাউবগী
লোখীবা থাখিবা শিংবগী থিজখিবা। [illegible] শি. মখুমথ মী ৪/৫/৩০৮ থাবী
থাখিবা লোইখিবা শিজখিবনি।
✓ (৪) চাউবা মী খমগী মখৎতা অহৈ শি. মখুমথ মী ৪/৫/৩০৮ থাবী
খুনবা মহৈ তোং খুমখাবগী মহুন খোইখৈবা খুনীদা থাউবা অহিকী
অহৈ। শি: মী মখুৎতা তিথাগী লোইখিবু, চাউবা ওৎখোইবা থামাখিনী।
অহৈ শি: মখুমথু লোইখোম লিংখিবু, মখা খুমখেম থামখিনে।
(৫) খুলাই খাওনবা চাউবা নুপীগী মখৎতা থানা ১৯৩৯ মিয়াংগী
খুলাই লাইখনবা নুপী অতংগু লোইখনবা হৈবা খুমখা-
মী লিংখিবু খুলাই তিথিবা মী অহুগী মখৎতা তিথাগী লোইখিবু। মরমদি
হোইনা খুমম তিথিবা মী অহুগী মখৎতা লিংখিবা মতমদানি)
অখুমখী মহুত ওইদবনা হাইজখি হাইখগী মীয়াম তিঙ্গবা মতমদানি

p.T.O.

(৩)

অমাইকুমুং লোইশঙ মমলগী মশমু [illegible]।

(৬) নুপাগী মীয়ম [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]।

নুপাগী [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

(৭) [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]! [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]। [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]!

(৯) অমাইকমুং [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]।

(৮) [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]। [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] নুপাগী [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] বর্তমান [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]।

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] ২/৩/৪ [illegible]। [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] নুপাগী [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]। অমাইকমুং [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]। [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]। ইতি [illegible]/১১/৪০/ইং

সাক্ষর

[illegible]

[XII]

Copy

To H.H. The Maharajah of Manipur
K.S.S.I.C.B.E.

[illegible]

[illegible]

ইং তাং ১৩/১/৪০ ইং

[illegible]

[XIII]

[See Chapter Eleven, Reference Nos 20 and 21, "Women sent to jail, Leader sent to prison and Prince murdered " p 248]

[Priyo Brata Singh, Police Member, wrote to the President of the Manipur State Darbar on 26th February 1940 saying that the article *viz*, **"Manipur State Peoples' Struggle"** was erroneous and misleading He urged that the Darbar should contradict some of the points mentioned therein otherwise it would give people outside Manipur "a very wrong impression of the recent unhappy incident " On enquiry E Tompok Singh [Secretary-in-charge of Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha] revealed that the article was published in the ***Forward*** paper by the deputationists of the Working Committee of Mahasabha, and the Committee wrote the article See Memo No 165 N M M , dated Imphal 13th March 1940, Sig , E Tompok Singh] Re FORWARD, Vol III (New Series), No 4, Saturday February 17, 1940, Editor Bhupendra Kumar Datta, page 4, Col 3rd and page 11 Col 1

Forward

Vol. III NEW SERIES No. 4

Saturday, February 17, 1940

Editor : —BHUPENDRA KUMAR DATTA

February 17 1940 FORWARD

MANIPUR STATE PEOPLES' STRUGGLE

The general mass of Manipur State including all nations Manipuries Nagas and Mohammedans of both sex men and women are making the following claims to His Highness and the Political Agent of Manipur but no action is taken yet

1 To stop the export of rice till next harvest as there is every fear of meeting a famine due to want of stock

2 To stop the rice milling system which has eaten up the earnings of women of Dhan-husking

3 To remove the present Durbar Members who are found unworthy for Administration and replace them by new members through elections

4 To remove the present State Servants in the Police Department who are all untrained and also found unfit for Administration

5 To allow a Legislative Council in the nature already claimed by the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha The scheme of which had been submitted to His Highness as asked for through his Private Secretary

6 To decide the case of one Chhabi Manipurini, who was assaulted by the Inspector of Police, by snatching her from the crowd and giving 2 slaps with a kick of boot on the chest

7 To decide the case of 10 Manipuri women who were imprisoned for one month on the charge of picketing by the Durbar

8 To decide the case of one Oinam Ibemhan Manipurini who was assaulted in an inhuman manner by a Police Officer causing bleeding for several days She

remained in the Civil Hospital for several days under the treatment of the Civil Surgeon

9 To decide the case of causing unnecessary assault to the innocent crowd on 14 1 40 and thereby causing injuries to 40 women and some men

10 To decide the case of 9 leaders of the Praja Sanmilani who were arrested out of the processionists on 28 1 40 and detained in the Police Custody more than 24 hours without informing the charge on which they were arrested

11 To decide the case of the bayonet charge and thereby causing severe wounds to 20 women A woman of the age of more than 70 years who received wound from bayonet charge is not yet coming back to her normal temper

His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India and His Excellency the Governor of Assam have been approached for favour of causing a prompt inquiry by a tribunal and thereby decide the cases but no action is yet taken Hence the General mass are in unspeakable distress The agitation is still going on by preserving Hartal everywhere

AN APPEAL

Manipur State is in a ferment Women are in the vanguard of a struggle against the autocratic State Government Undaunted by *Lathi* blows and bayonet charges the brave women of Manipur are marching forward with a firm resolve to vindicate their honour and obtain justice Saturated with the spirit of non violence they will not take defeat but will carry on till the battle is won They are looking up to you for sympathy and help Here is the story in a nutshell

Last year there was acute scarcity in Manipur owing to floods There was a ban on the export of rice In November last when the harvest season was on the ban was suddenly lifted and the price of rice shot up causing acute hardship to local consumers And on December 12 four thousand Manipuri women approached the State Durbar with a prayer for continuing the ban on the export of rice so as to check the inflation of price in the local market but the Durbar refused to interfere without the consent of His Highness the Maharaja who was then at Navadwip

Having agreed to communicate the fact to His Highness and obtain his consent by wire the President of the Durbar proceeded to the Telegraph office followed by the crowd of four thousand women When after awhile he wanted to go away the assemblage requested him to stay till the Maharaja's reply was received pleading that they had been starving since the previous day and wanted an early decision But to their utter amazement a contingent of the Assam Rifles suddenly appeared on the scene and perpetrated a ruthless attack on the peaceful crowd of unarmed and innocent women Twenty women received bayonet wounds in five cases the injuries were serious

Since then the movement has been growing apace and gaining strength Hundred of women are coming from distant villages to join this just fight for the redress of their grievances and vindication of their honour The Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha is helping the women fighters but the Mahasabha's resources are very limited and the small fund that it had has been exhausted in feeding the women volunteers from distant villages

Such being the case the Mahasabha appeals to the generous public all over India for financial help to enable the brave women of Manipur to continue the struggle and win their goal It is earnestly hoped all freedom loving people will come forward with their contributions large or small to the fund which has been opened to alleviate the sufferings of the women fighters in a just cause

All contributions may kindly be sent to the Treasurer Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha P O Imphal Manipur Assam

[XIV]

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the charges are to be enquired for action to be taken

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[illegible]

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(৫) [illegible]

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১৫। [illegible]

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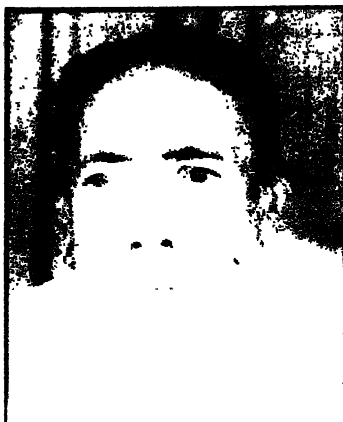
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[XV]



Sougrakpam Lakhi Devi
Kakwa Mapal



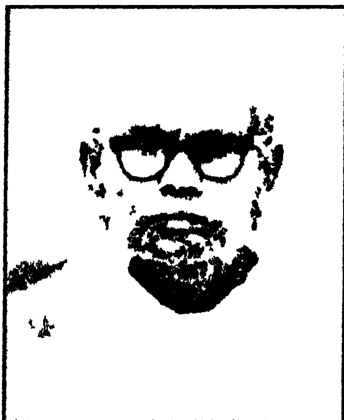
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Uripok Sorbonthingel



Smt. Yumnam Tampak Devi
Yumnam Leikai



Wahengbam Tongou Devi
Wahengbam Leikai



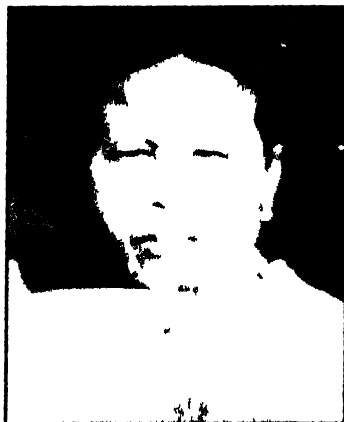
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Singjamei



Wangkhem Kumari Devi
Sagolband Nepra Menjor



Smt. Maipakpi Devi
Thangmeiband



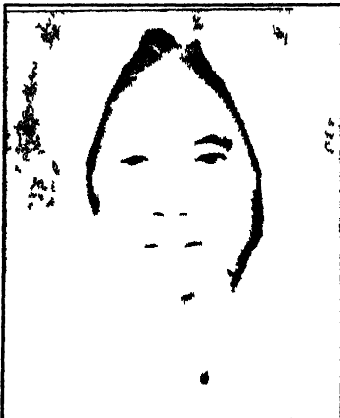
R.K. Sanajaobi Devi
Tera Keithel



Yengkhom Sabi Devi
Takyel Khongbal



Laishram Amubi Devi
Thangmeiband



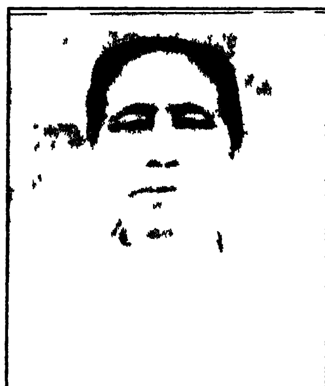
Bamon Chaonuhal Devi
Naga Mapal



Pukhrambam Ibemhal Devi
Uripok



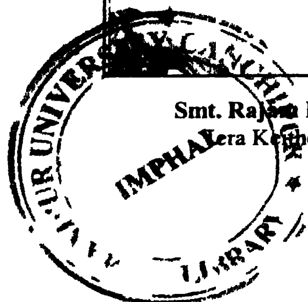
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Bamon Leikai

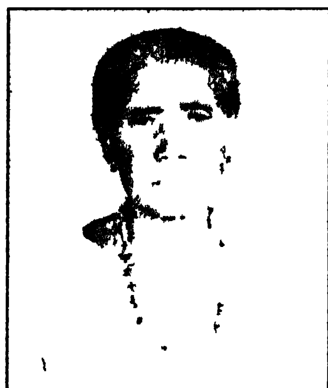


Smt. Bamon Indumukhi Devi
Naga Mapal

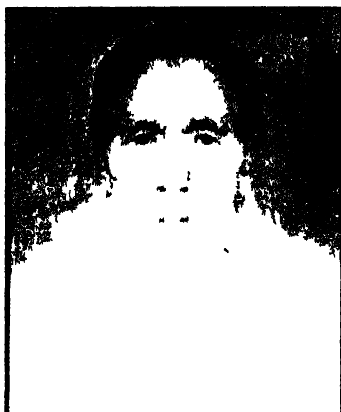


Smt. Ra[illegible] Devi
Tera Keithel





Leishangthem Ongbi Ibemhal Devi
Wangkhei Thangjam Leikai



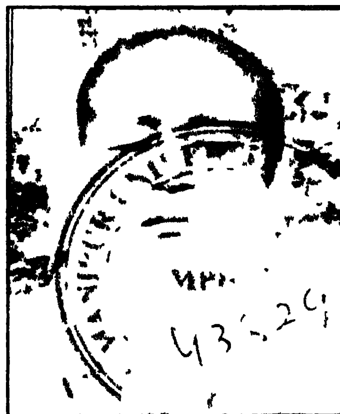
Laishram Leipaklei Devi
Naoriya Pakhanglakpa



N. Ibemcha Devi
Tera Keithel



H. Ibechaobi Devi
Elangbam Leikai, Leirak Macha



Nongthombam Khongnang Devi
Sogalband Tera Keithel

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE AUTHOR

Dr. Karam Manimohan Singh was born at Imphal [Manipur] in May 1951. In his Graduation he was awarded Distinction Degree by the Gauhati University in 1970 and in his Master's level he studied English literature at the Benaras Hindu University in 1972 from where he obtained his Ph.D. Degree in English [1980] under the guidance of Dr. G. B. Mohan Thampi Dr. Sc. Phil. [Berlin]. In 1977 he received a Teacher Fellowship award [F.I.P.] from the University Grants Commission for his Ph.D. work on *A Comparative Study on the Poetic Technique of T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats*.

He started taking keen interest in the history of Manipur after he became a full time teacher in the College and on finding a meagre printed material on the local past history of the State he started an their research and critical investigation from the piles of the various correspondences available here and there all over India and abroad but all connected with the political history of the country.

A few books have been to his credit [both in English and Manipuri] and others are awaiting. Among his published works mention may be made of *[illegible]* [A Poem Collection] 19[illegible], *[illegible]* [A Poem Collection] 1978, *Hijam Irabot Singh and Political Movement in Manipur* [1989], *History of the Christian Missions in Manipur and Other Neighbouring States* [1991]. He has other books in manuscript ready for publication viz. *The [illegible] Rebels of Manipur*, *Sixteen Years of Imperial Regency in Manipur*, *A Critical History of Manipuri Literature* [1709 to 1900], *Haodeijam Chaitanya Singh, Father of Modern Manipuri Literature* and *Questions arising from the Kabo Valley and the British Reserve* etc.

